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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

"JUSTICE, TRUTH AND HUMANITY":

The Practical Morality of Maria Edgeworth's Work for Children

BY

LYNN R. GERGENS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1988

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"Justice, Truth and Humanity":
The Practical Morality of Maria Edgeworth's Works for Children

submitted by Lynn R. Gergens in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Patricia Demers
(Supervisor)
Gary Kelly
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Date: Fall, 1988

DEDICATION

With sincere appreciation to Dr. Patricia Demers, who introduced me to Maria Edgeworth.

In loving memory of my father.

ABSTRACT

Although Maria Edgeworth has long since passed into obscurity, she was a writer of some significance in her own day, and, in my opinion, deserves modern recognition for her work, particularly as a writer of children's literature. Edgeworth changed the art of literature written for children in ways which survive to the present day. Her practical morality, defined in Practical Education as "justice, truth and humanity," provides a contrast to the sectarian moralizing and religion presented by many of her contemporaries (Hannah More, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Sarah Trimmer and Mary Sherwood) and most of her predecessors (James Janeway, John Bunyan and Isaac Watts). Through a study of The Parent's Assistant (1796), Early Lessons (1801), and Little Plays for Children (1827), Edgeworth can be seen as having freed children's tales to become more imaginative and delightful. Not only did Edgeworth remove the until-then prevailing sense of fear in works devoted to the moral formation of the young, but she also effectively and respectfully removed this work from the stranglehold of doctrine and catechesis.

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Introduction

> No one has spoken aloud here since the room was opened in 1854. The obscure sleep on the walls, slouching against each other as if they were too drowsy to stand upright. Their backs are flaking off; their titles often vanished. Why disturb their sleep? Why reopen those peaceful graves, the librarian seems to ask, peering over his spectacles . . .
>
> For one likes romantically to feel oneself a deliverer advancing with lights across the waste of years to the rescue of some stranded ghost--waiting, appealing, forgotten, in the growing gloom. Possibly they hear one coming. They shuffle, they preen, they bridle. Old secrets well up to their lips. The divine relief of communication will soon again be theirs. (Virginia Woolf, The Common Reader, 146)

Virginia Woolf claims that there is merit in writing down "a few of the ideas and opinions (of common readers) which, insignificant in themselves, . . . contribute to so mighty a result" (12). The mighty result is a reference to poetical honours in the following comment she excerpts from Dr. Johnson's Life of Gray: "I rejoice to concur with the common reader; for by the common sense of readers, uncorrupted by literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtilty and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claim to poetical honours" (11). Woolf's statements are both a shadow of critical opinion prior to 1925, and a precursor of ideas which were to recur in literary criticism regarding the work of Maria Edgeworth. Popular opinion--the common reader--acclaimed Maria Edgeworth one of the great writers of her day, on the same level as Sir Walter Scott. This claim for 'poetical honours' was likewise recognized by contemporary critical opinion. Nevertheless, in this century Maria Edgeworth has

become one of the obscure, certainly to the common reader, and not infrequently to the critical one. Many critics claim that her books deserve to remain like a nameless tombstone--forgotten, collecting dust, backs flaking off--on the shelves of libraries, while others, such as Elizabeth Harden and myself, maintain "a shamefully selfish hope: that others will read and reread Maria Edgeworth and will hopefully find reason to join in a common effort to rescue her--at least, partially--from the undeserved oblivion into which she has fallen" (Maria Edgeworth preface). The recurring desire amongst a certain segment of modern day readers and critics to rescue Edgeworth's "stranded ghost" is perhaps one sign of her contribution to English literature.

Maria Edgeworth, in my opinion, deserves critical recognition and current modern readership for her contributions in at least three areas of critical acclaim--her work as the first Irish national novelist, her work within the realm of the English Novel of Manners, and her work in children's literature. It is the aim of this thesis to prove her merit as a writer of children's books, a writer who overcame the sectarian moralizing of the period in which she lived to demonstrate a practical morality. This practical morality is defined, in the preface to The Parent's Assistant, as "justice, truth and humanity," the principles of practical education which supercede all boundaries of class or nation (iv). In expounding on these touchstones for education she bypasses the work of both her predecessors and most of her contemporaries, and removes the overwhelming sense of fear in works devoted to the moral instruction of the young. Writers before and during Edgeworth's day contributed

many significant changes to the art of writing children's literature but their tales were all bound by the doctrine they adhered to.

In order to substantiate this claim, I propose the following outline. The first chapter will be devoted to a brief look at Edgeworth's predecessors, particularly James Janeway, John Bunyan and Isaac Watts. The history of children's literature reveals a doctrinaire approach, full of fear and horror, to the child's moral instruction. Until the eighteenth century parents and mentors perceived children to be miniature adults; thus books for the young assumed that children could cope with what was seen to be the most important and basic element of reality--that man and little man, the child, is destined to the hell-fire of damnation unless he takes (and sometimes in spite of) the necessary precautions.

Out of this context John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote, presenting revolutionary new ideas about both the nature of the child and the appropriate means of educating that child. In reaction to both their predecessors and to Rousseau's theory of education, Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth wrote Practical Education. The scope of this work was enormous, with comments on prevalent notions of education and on contemporary attempts to demonstrate those notions. It left few aspects of child-rearing to chance and in so doing indicated that there was no aspect of the child's education which was too insignificant both for their comments and, more importantly, for parents' and/or tutors' concern and attention. It was received as a milestone in the understanding of the education of children. An examination of this work will provide the basis for the discussion of

the principles of education which Maria Edgeworth incorporated into her children's books.

In the third chapter I will discuss Edgeworth's contemporaries and their understanding of the task of writing literature for children. Hannah More, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Sarah Trimmer and Mary Sherwood had in common a more puritan understanding of the need to write books for the young. Although their works are less blatantly threatening, with enhanced plot development softening their ultimate doctrines, they are still brimful of sectarian moralizing and fear-filled religion. Although Edgeworth differed in the manner in which she understood her duty as a writer, she shared with her contemporaries some common notions about the nature of the child, the appropriateness of fantasy, fairy tale and horror within children's tales, and the need to help the child--and the parent--address prevalent contemporary issues such as cruelty to animals. In the 'man of letters' age in which these women lived, it is not a difficult task to ascertain their opinions of each other. For the most part they shared a high regard, and many of their letters and prefaces to books indicate their indebtedness to each other.

The fourth chapter will be a close discussion of three of Maria Edgeworth's books for children: The Parent's Assistant, Early Lessons, and Little Plays for Young People. Written between 1796 and 1814, these books demonstrate the theories of education first delineated in Practical Education. Although the moral tales in both The Parent's Assistant and Early Lessons are formulaic and rather predictable, they represent a complete reversal from the terrifying tales of the Puritans which her contemporaries were not always averse

to imitating. Critical opinion of Little Plays is almost non-existent, but the work is, I believe, a fresh and revealing approach by which to examine Maria Edgeworth's practical morality.

Maria Edgeworth was an accomplished woman who lived a long and productive life. While her contributions to the art of writing children's literature gained her a place of merit amongst her contemporaries, her achievements were not limited to the realm of children's tales, nor to the realm of pedagogy. Maria moved to Edgeworthstown at the age of fifteen; thereafter she took an active role in the management of the family estate, assuming almost total responsibility after her father's death in 1817. Through her work as an Irish landowner, she came to hold strong opinions about the education necessary to help peasants, and about the appropriateness of maintaining the status quo among the ruling class in Ireland. During the Irish famine, towards the end of her life, Edgeworth was tireless in her efforts on behalf of the poor. She intended the profits from her last book, Orlandino, published in 1848, to be donated to the poor. By this time in her life, Edgeworth had enough of a following to elicit the help of her public on behalf of the estate peasants. Augustus Hare, commenting on the family letters, writes that a group of satisfied children readers from Boston sent one hundred and fifty pounds of flour and rice to Edgeworthstown (328). While Edgeworth was not actively involved politically, she did express her views about the political situation in Ireland in at least four of her novels. Her Irish novels--Castle Rackrent, Ormond, Patronage and Ennui--earned for her the title of first Irish national novelist. Sir Walter Scott

enhanced this idea by recognizing his indebtedness to Edgeworth when writing Waverley. In the Postscript Scott writes:

> It has been my object to describe these persons, not by a caricatured and exaggerated use of the national dialect, but by their habits, manners and feelings; so as in some distinct degree to emulate the admirable Irish portraits drawn by Miss Edgeworth. (477)

Castle Rackrent is perhaps the best known of all of Edgeworth's books. It is certainly the only one of her books that has been republished in the last decade. Written without consultation with Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Castle Rackrent was first published in 1800. Her portraits of Thady and the Rackrent family are the ones which endeared her to Scott.

Another contemporary, Jane Austen, recognized Edgeworth's success in another genre, that of the social novel, or the novel of manners. Austen credited Edgeworth as a novelist worth reading.[1] In Northanger Abbey she recognizes Belinda as a:

> . . . work in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best-chosen language. (30)

Belinda, according to some critics, forms "a link between the eighteenth and nineteenth century novels of manners," and "also illustrates the tendency of the novel to develop a social purpose" (Moody and Lovett, 341).

Edgeworth's success as a novel writer in both these genres led to social success and a place in London society. She was the most

---

[1]It is interesting to note that although Austen admired Edgeworth's work and sent her copies of her own novels, Edgeworth claimed to have had difficulty finishing Austen's books.

celebrated practising English novelist from 1800, when she published Castle Rackrent, to 1814, when Scott published Waverley. Perhaps Edgeworth's familiarity with London society explains her criticism of both that society and of contemporary writers. Edgeworth was clearly opposed to the publishing of her private letters; this opposition stemmed from the fact that she freely expressed in those letters not only highest praise for writers she admired, but harshest criticism for those she disdained.

Modern criticism regarding Maria Edgeworth concentrates on her achievements in these two genres--as Irish national novelist and as social novelist. Edgeworth's contributions as a writer of children's tales are recognized most often in the history of children's literature where she is lumped together with other moralists of the same period. Discussion of Edgeworth as a successful children's writer is cursory in most books devoted to the study of her work. Marilyn Butler, in Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography, offers the best and most thorough study of Edgeworth, but even her comments in the chapter "A Novelist for the Nursery" do not recognize the full accomplishment of Edgeworth in changing the trend of children's literature. Butler acknowledges the popularity of Edgeworth's children's tales and also realizes that they were more lasting than her work for adults, but most of her comments, although offering a certain amount of praise, recognize only the aspects of Edgeworth's children's books which give biographical details. Those details are necessary in fulfilling Butler's purpose of studying the origins of Edgeworth's books. Once these origins are determined, Butler's discussion ends. Thus her study of "The Bracelets," "Rosamond" and

"Simple Susan" are brief, too brief to do anything but suggest the place of the children's tales in Edgeworth's life as a writer. Butler does not suggest that these tales had a lasting impact on the kinds of tales which were to become popular for children long after Edgeworth's other novels were forgotten.

Elizabeth Harden has written two books about Edgeworth. Maria Edgeworth's Art of Prose Fiction was published in 1971 and includes one chapter on Edgeworth's children's tales. Harden credits Edgeworth with offering books that were landmarks because they introduce "living, breathing children" and understand "the psychology and behaviour of children more thoroughly than any of her predecessors" (18). Harden criticizes Edgeworth for sacrificing plot and character to doctrine, for contriving situations which are not realistic, and for lacking the complexity which could produce real interest on the part of the reader. Her summary is that "at their best, the stories are admirably suited to children, lively in interest, and spirited in narrative. At their worst, they are sugar-coated sermons in miniature, lecture parceled out in dialogue" (41). Harden's Maria Edgeworth, published in 1984, was written to refute her first book. Harden's opinion had changed over the years; her second book recognized Edgeworth's genius as a gifted and original writer. Her comments on the children's tales are kinder in the second book, recognizing that within their social context they demonstrate an admirable understanding of the nature of the child, leading to complexity in plot development and rich character contrasts. Her second summary states that while the stories are not uniformly good--Edgeworth "sometimes sacrificed amusement to instruction"--"at her

best, she convincingly developed the tragedies and triumphs of childhood" (33).

James Newcomer has also published two books discussing Maria Edgeworth: Maria Edgeworth the Novelist in 1967, and Maria Edgeworth in 1973. In the first book he makes no mention of the children's tales, and in the second he briefly discusses (in less than ten pages) both Practical Education and the children's books. His conclusion is that the "sermonizing was probably no less uncongenial to children in the 1790's than it is today and that it would be vain, probably, to suppose that Frank and Harry and Rosamond could command a reading public today" (38, 39).

Mark Hawthorne published Doubt and Dogma in Maria Edgeworth in 1967. The comments regarding Edgeworth's children's literature are designed more to advance one particular idea than to recognize any integral genius in the children's tales. His comments are brief but compliment Edgeworth for producing classics of children's literature which combine "delicate brilliance" with "unexpected Life" and "freshness" (23). He recognizes one flaw--her moralizing--but tends to blame it on Richard Lovell Edgeworth.

As the above summary indicates, most modern scholarship about Edgeworth is scanty, classifying her children's stories as dull and didactic. I propose that only by examining Edgeworth within her historical context can she be rescued from this fate. Modern readers are familiar with Dr. Seuss, Shel Silverstein and Mercer Mayer. The Cat in the Hat books offer nonsense exceeded only by Edward Lear, Silverstein appeals to the childish imagination where dentists are swallowed by cavity-prone crocodiles, and Mayer suggests a wonderful,

comic world where good knights are defeated by terrible trolls. Placed next to these books, which have no other purpose but to amuse the child, Edgeworth's tales are like medicine beside candy. But if you place Edgeworth's tales next to those of either her predecessors (Janeway, Bunyan and Watts) or her contemporaries (More, Barbauld, Trimmer and Sherwood), it is Edgeworth's writing that compares to candy and the others to medicine. Edgeworth's predecessors and her contemporaries intended their books to be medicinal. They were meant to instruct children who lived in a sinful condition which destined them to death and hell. Edgeworth intended to teach morals to children in pleasing ways. At their worst they were candy-flavored medicine.

I. The Religious Morality of Edgeworth's Predecessors: Janeway, Bunyan and Watts

The Historical Background

Charles Dickens presented many child figures in his novels. These vivid portraits of pitiful children acknowledge the stark realities of the 1840's, with many of the children having horrible and not unrealistic ends because they were not lucky enough to be like Tiny Tim in A Christmas Carol, "who did not die" but instead found an adopted, transformed second father in Scrooge. With our twentieth-century notions of child-rearing and child-care we may be appalled by the picture which Dickens presents, but the reality of that picture cannot be denied. Each century, our own included, has voices that call for reformation in the treatment of children. Those voices were dim prior to the eighteenth century because a belief that children were merely diminutive adults stilled voices that suggested children might require special considerations. Childhood was seen, at best, as a phase to be passed through as quickly as possible. Jane Bingham and Grayce Scholt, in Fifteen Centuries of Children's Literature, describe the conditions in which children were raised:

> . . . infanticide was still practiced . . . child neglect and cruelty were common, and most authorities still considered the rod the chief instrument of child rearing. Not until medical practices changed in the eighteenth century did life expectancy rise. As before, the most vulnerable years were the early ones, especially for poor children. With soaring death rates, parents of all classes knew it was likely that only one out of two of their offspring would survive. Perhaps because of the psychological risk of becoming too involved, many parents, as in former times, remained fatalistic, viewing the death of their young with indifference. (91)

It is important to understand these attitudes towards children in order to understand the literature which was written for them. To judge early works of literature as dreary, didactic and moralizing is perhaps to judge them by today's standards, instead of understanding them within the social, religious and political contexts in which they were written.

In the first half of the eighteenth century the industrial revolution was changing man's concept of his own power, while the French Revolution caused many to challenge the superiority of the "ruling" classes. It was this social setting that Maria Edgeworth and her contemporaries reflected. Edgeworth broke free from previous trends and approached writing from a rational perspective, while her contemporaries returned to the religious security of their forefathers to cope with changing social times. Edgeworth witnessed eighteenth century depravity in the political upheaval in Ireland when she lived on the family estate. While she maintained a firm conviction that it was right and proper for the upper classes to rule, she hoped that landlords would accept their social responsibilities and implement just means of ruling the peasant classes. A model for this communal responsibility was found in the Edgeworths' innovative estate management and in Maria Edgeworth's many stories and books. Ennui was the title of a book, but it was a subject which she returned to with some frequency, lamenting the consequences which moral and physical idleness produced. It is not only her Irish novels which reflect the social realities of the period. Her children's stories recognize: the plight of the poor (The Orphans), the irredeemable qualities of those toughened to life in overcrowded, filthy city conditions (The

Little Merchants), the injustice created by absentee landlordship or middlemen (Simple Susan), and the absolute barrier between lower and upper classes she wished to observe (Frank), but which was crumbling (Little Merchants). These changing social conditions form an integral part of didactic children's writing. Edgeworth's social setting influenced her understanding of the nature of childhood. This understanding led her to recognize the need to change, however subtly, the instructive intent of her predecessors, the first writers of children's literature.

The beginning of children's literature is a topic of much debate in criticism. The basis for this argument rests in conflicting notions about how to define children's literature. Surveys of books for children at times include works written for adults but read by children (i.e. the chapbooks); they sometimes define children's literature as those books written specifically for children; or they include only those stories intended to amuse child readers. F.J. Harvey Darton, Paul Hazard, Geoffrey Summerfield and Bette Goldstone represent the many critics who have attempted to define children's literature. Their definitions tend to neglect an historical understanding of children's literature and are made subservient to the larger theses of their individual studies. F.J. Harvey Darton suggests that there really was no "children's literature" before the seventeenth century (1). Paul Hazard, in Books, Children and Men (1944), gives one reason why this might be true:

> In museums we see portraits painted by the old masters of little girls dressed in the fashion of their day. How must they have suffered in those narrow slippers and heavy velvet skirts, with waist imprisoned in a corset, ribbons hugging the

> neck, plumed hat crushing the head, to say nothing of necklaces and rings, bracelets and brooches! We long to free them, to give them soft and dainty frocks suitable to young bodies. We long, too, to free those little imitation men who are strapped up rigidly in boots and armor and wear, in spite of their heroic pose, such a ridiculous and unhappy air. If, for centuries, grownups did not even think of giving children appropriate clothes, how would it ever have occurred to them to provide children with suitable books? (5-6)

Hazard's notion of what is suitable for children's reading goes beyond Darton's idea of entertaining the child. Hazard suggests that children's literature should entertain the child on his own terms, not according to what the adult thinks is fit or entertaining, but according to what the child thinks.

Geoffrey Summerfield in his more recent study Fantasy and Reason: Children's Literature in the Eighteenth Century (1984) claims that since "the purpose of growing up is to grow out of childhood, it follows that the status of most children is one of powerlessness." He agrees with Hazard's estimation that children's literature prior to the late 1800's taught children to be prim and proper, ridding them of "poetic 'fairy' foolishness" (xii). Children, in a rather subversive fashion, Summerfield suggests, devoured the "vulgar nonsense of the romances under the very noses of the didactic adults." Young readers found amusement in spite of attempts to promote "'official' adult-sanctioned" (xv) books. The recognition of this particular reality, that readers will find amusement in 'bad' literature if there is none in 'good' literature, perhaps explains the gradual shift from purely didactic to delightfully instructive literature. But many modern writers do not recognize purely didactic literature as children's literature. Bette Goldstone defines children's writing as

"specifically created not for financial gain, not to propagandize a specific religious or philosophic belief, but for the child's enjoyment and moral development" (36). Using this definition, Goldstone claims that eighteenth century didactic writers were the first "true" writers for children.

If children's books are defined as only those which provide some form of amusement or entertainment for children, then Darton's claim is true, and there really were no children's books until the 1744 production of A Little Pretty Pocket-Book by John Newbery. But to say there were no children's books before that would be to deny the existence of earlier books written specifically for the instruction of the child reader--primers, courtesy books and catechisms. Robert Pattison, in The Child Figure in English Literature, calls these educational works "a compressed species of adult reading" provided for the child who "is only a littler replica of his sinful, mature parents" (147). These books were intended to impart either factual information or religious doctrine, usually in the form of laws and rules, which would improve the child. The Puritans provided their own hell-fire tales, written specifically for children, which left their audience in a perpetual state of doubt and, if the authors are to be believed, constantly on their knees making reparation before a God of justice. The Puritans viewed children as unformed tiny adults who were neither too young to sin, nor too little to go to Hell.

James Janeway

In 1671 James Janeway, a nonconformist preacher, published A Token for Children Being an Exact Account of the Conversion, Holy and

Exemplary Lives, and Joyful Deaths, of Several Young Children. The motto for the book was taken from Mark 10:14, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of God." In his introduction to the Garland facsimile edition Robert Miner writes, "If the Lord had anticipated James Janeway's misinterpretations of these immortal words, Christian doctrine on children might have been more scrupulously articulated" (v). Miner's opinion of Janeway is a fairly popular one, being somewhat sarcastic and doubtful about the possibility that Janeway may have made any real contributions to the improvement of children's literature. It is not difficult to understand the modern reaction to Janeway, for his conversion tales were meant to be 'scarifying.' The idea of terrifying young children into goodness is not an acceptable modern method of persuasion.

Janeway has a preface for both parents (or teachers) and for his child readers. In both he makes clear his purpose for writing, to save children from almost certain damnation, for

> they which lye, must go to their Father the Devil into everlasting burning;
> they which never pray, God will pour out his wrath upon them;
> and when they beg and pray in Hell Fire, God will not forgive them, but there they must lye forever. (preface)

Janeway would agree with his predecessor Cotton Mather that it is better for a child to be whipped than to suffer the fires of Hell, for "Hell is a terrible place, that's worse a thousand times than whipping." His prefaces take an interesting catechetical form with repetition ensuring that no lesson is unlearned. It is impossible to finish reading the Children's Preface without knowing that a good

child obeys his parents, reads Scripture continually, meditates upon the state of his soul, and weeps and begs for forgiveness, all to the exclusion of play. Playing is a waste of valuable repentance time, for "How do you know but that you may be the next Child that may die?" In his preface to parents, Janeway admonishes parents and teachers for their laziness and unfaithfulness in teaching their children, and reminds them that they are obliged to give their children every possible chance for salvation, for they will be held accountable for the "Precious Jewel(s) . . . committed to their charge."

Janeway uses children as his examples. The thirteen children in A Token for Children range in age from two to ten; they also range from being fairly ordinary children to being supposedly terrible monsters (as in Example VII). His child examples are fairly consistent: they are converted, they wail and weep about their wickedness, and they try to convert everyone around them -- brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers. They experience agonizing doubts about their salvation, and they finally die and are buried, hopefully to go to Heaven. Janeway's children are hopelessly unrealistic, not only for modern readers but for seventeenth-century readers. Understanding the depth of Janeway's religious conviction goes a long way toward forgiving his unbearably pious children who appear to be, in Bess Adams' words, "too perfect for life on this earth" (22). There was no room for lightheartedness because for Janeway there was never any certainty of salvation. Sarah Howley, the first example given, is true to life and documented. She is easily and quickly converted, as are all of Janeway's examples, and from the time of her conversion she appears to lead a model, perfect life, dutiful to her parents,

attempting to convert her siblings, praying, reading Scripture and repenting continually. Even after six years of this impossibly good life, though, when Sarah becomes ill at fourteen, she agonizes over her "bad" life, and fears that she will be "undone to all eternity!" (6). She dreads mistakes and experiences no assurance of salvation until through a "Divine Rapture" she reaches an almost delirious state before finally dying--still preaching to those around--a horrifyingly slow and painful death. However grim Janeway's examples were--Percy Muir suggests that "death might indeed be a happy release from the regime enforced" (30)--he was nevertheless an immensely popular writer. Many other examples, following the pattern that he established, were produced by like-minded writers over the next one hundred and thirty years.[2]

While Janeway's children seem to be possessed of many unchildlike characteristics, he nevertheless is one of the first and few writers to employ the child figure, and to speak directly to the child in his preface. It is important to understand that for Janeway and for the many parents who gave him to their children to read, his work was not meant to be a tedious task but rather to provide light reading which would instruct them in one necessary lesson, to save themselves from perdition. Unquestionably sincere in his aim, Janeway died before he was forty. His intensity is not surprising; he "saw ravages of plague in a not over-moral city, saw the fire, (and) suffered persecution for his beliefs" (Darton 57). He writes, assuming that the child he

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[2]Mrs. Field notes that as late as 1822 a three-volume work called Examples for Youth was published (190) and Pattison claims that A Token for Children was still in print as late as 1847 (136).

addresses "is capable of rationally understanding and correcting his fallen condition" (Pattison 136). If the tales appear somewhat morbid, that may be because of the century in which we live, for "Puritan parents . . . coped with their offspring's deaths by reminding themselves that life was not intended to be pleasant but only a means to the hereafter, 'an error to be rectified'" (Bingham and Scholt 97).

John Bunyan

John Bunyan shared Janeway's goals in writing instructional material for children. He wished to save the souls of his readers. While Janeway is one of the obscure for modern readers, Bunyan is still quite commonly recognized, not as a writer of children's literature, but as the composer of Pilgrim's Progress, written in 1678. It, like the later Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver's Travels, was incorporated in the body of literature considered to be good for children, even though it was not originally intended for young readers. After the gloom of Janeway, Pilgrim's Progress provides an adventurous contrast "complete with giants and fabulous monsters, sword contests, ill-fortune from which the hero is regularly delivered, and the happiest of all endings" (Muir 28). Unfortunately, Bunyan's work for children, A Book for Boys and Girls, published in 1686, is much more solemn. Bunyan emerged from the same social context as Janeway, and shared his ultimate goal of saving children from Hell, by whatever means necessary. Bunyan does not minimize the horrors awaiting those children who die naughty, but he does succeed in instructing his children without the terror that is ever present in

Janeway. Part of the terror in Janeway is that his examples are always dying, young and in pain. Bunyan's children are healthy reprobates rather than dying pietists. In this way, A Book for Boys and Girls is more persuasive than A Token for Children.

In his preface to the reader, Bunyan suggests that his book is for children of "all Sorts and Degrees." It can also be of use for "bearded men (who), do act like Beardless Boys"; and for women who "please themselves with childish Toys." His purpose is to

> . . . shew them how each Fingle-fangle,
> On which they doting are, their Souls, entangle,
> As with a Web, a Trap, a Ginn, or Snare:
> And will destroy them, have they not a care.

Bunyan accomplishes this task by using the everyday to discuss eternal and spiritual matters. The style of rhymed verse that Bunyan uses softens his message and lends itself to his method of sermonizing which is less direct than that adopted by Janeway. In the preface to Boys and Girls, he includes some helps for children to learn to read English. His reasons for doing this are predictably narrow, as his comment at the end of the teaching charts explains: "I shall forbear to add more, being persuaded this is enough for little Children to prepare themselves for Psalter, or Bible."

Bunyan's verses lend themselves to memorization, which was obviously his object. With Bunyan the child would have an easier time of memorizing such catechetical necessities as The Ten Commandments, The Lord's Prayer and The Creed. As well as providing these set doctrines, the book aims at teaching children to reflect upon their faith at every opportunity. Each object of nature, each natural play

setting is used to preach salvation. Thus, when the child sees a spider he can also consider the sinner, and when he sees the candle, he is reminded to be watchful and make sure he has Grace which will save him from everlasting darkness. The message is more palatable but the threat is present. In his meditation on a Fig-tree the child is reminded, like the tree, to "Bear Fruit, or else thine End will cursed be!" (43). Although Bunyan attempts "To mount their Thoughts from what are childish Toys, / To heav'n, for that's prepar'd for Girls and Boys," he does not soften towards the idea of child play. Bunyan felt, as did Janeway, that "Death's a cold Comforter to Girls and Boys, / Who wedded are unto their Childish Toys" (62). As Janeway did, Bunyan addressed children directly, and considered them to be miniature adults capable of understanding the consequences of their own behaviour. He accepts the restrictions imposed by the verse form in order to present his message simply, which also means his message is less direct and blatant than in Janeway. The quality of his verse has been roundly condemned in almost all critical examination of his book. Bunyan's introduction of the verse form into children's literature was, however, an innovative achievement which, by style alone, lessened the terror and solemnity of the lessons. Thirty years after A Book for Boys and Girls was published, Isaac Watts perfected this use of the verse form for religious instructional purposes.

Isaac Watts

According to his biographer, Isaac Watts the child was the embodiment of many of the Puritan ideals, devoting hours to writing

his verse in praise of God, rather than playing with other children. As an adult, however, Watts shared with his Puritan contemporaries the goal of conveying the doctrines of Christianity to a child audience. He perfected the use of the verse form as an easy tool for the memorization of Christian dogma, and moved yet another step away from the debilitating terror used to convince children of their evilness. Although he, with Janeway and Bunyan, was convinced that children were conceived and born into sin, Watts knew that the message of salvation which he preached was more readily accepted when presented in a delightful manner as opposed to a solely instructive manner. He addressed the child directly, and was concerned with the simplicity of his language in order to make sure that the child understood the full extent of his verse. His verses are, in contrast, more gentle, tolerant and persuasive. While Janeway did not deliberately make his work unpleasant, he ensured his readers' eternal good by terrifying them into submission. Bunyan removed abject terror from his work but was too stern to perceive pleasure as an acceptable end for his verse. Watts takes a giant stride by introducing the concept of delight with instruction into the Puritan sternness and absoluteness, which remained at the heart of his message.

In his Preface to the reader (the educator), Watts makes clear his purpose of delighting as well as instructing:

> 1. There is a greater Delight in the very learning of Truths and Duties this way (in verse form). There is something so amusing and entertaining in Rymes and Meter, that will incline Children to make this part of their Business a Diversion. . . .
>
> 2. What is learnt in Verse is longer retain'd in memory. . . .

> 3. This will be a constant Furniture for the Minds of Children, that they may have something to think upon when alone, and sing over to themselves. This may Sometimes give their Thoughts a divine Turn, and raise a young Meditation. Thus they will not be forced to seek relief for an Emptiness of Mind out of the loose and dangerous Sonnets of the Age.

Watts addresses himself to both the Church of England and Dissenters, claiming to 'sink' his language to the level of a child. Although he believed that children were capable of comprehending the seriousness of their eternal welfare and the bleak consequences of inappropriate or faithless actions, he made every effort to ensure that these doctrines were presented in the idiom of the child.

Watts, like Bunyan, includes in verse form means by which to memorize the basic tenets of faith contained in The Ten Commandments and The Golden Rule. The verse titles announce clearly the lessons to be learned: "A General Song of Praise to God," "The Excellency of the Bible," "Against Quarrelling and Fighting," etc. Like Bunyan, Watts makes use of the familiar, the everyday, in order to discuss the profound. This attention to the familiar makes the fear-filled moralizing a shade subtler than in Bunyan, and eons away from Janeway. As much as he succeeded in delighting children with these lilting verses, Watts still has a 'punch.' The point is the same as for Janeway: children are not too little to go to Hell. Where delight is not sufficient cause to change naughty behaviour, Watts still resorts to threats. In his song "Obedience to Parents," children are told in the first verse that they should revere their Parents with delight. In the middle two verses Watts substantiates his argument in case delight is not reason enough. In the second verse children read of dreadful

plagues that are threatened by God to those who do not obey their parents, and, finally, in the third verse they are threatened with reasons of guilt and terror:

> How cursed is his name!
> The Ravens shall pick out his Eyes,
> and Eagles eat the same. (33)

While twentieth-century readers may rejoice at the subtler shading of hell-fire in Watts, Mrs. Trimmer in her 1789 commentary on his work suggested that Watts had missed a great opportunity to press home Christian dogma by being too easy to understand. In her work with Sunday Schools, Mrs. Trimmer "wished the Songs first to be learned by heart, then recited in a Sunday class, and then to be explained, doctrine by doctrine" (Darton 111). While Mrs. Trimmer may have been disappointed that Watts did not provide his songs in the catechetical form of repetitions that she desired, she confirms the popularity of the songs amongst her own generation, particularly among the Sunday School Moralists. Only a work thought to be of superior quality would have been good enough for the treatment which Mrs. Trimmer suggests. Another indication of the great popularity of Watts' verses for children is the number of editions published. Divine Songs was first published in 1715. J.H.P. Pafford estimates that at least 667 editions, totalling over eight million copies, were published between 1715 and 1901.

While vast improvements are witnessed in Watts' treatment of children and child readers, Watts shared with Janeway and Bunyan the Puritan determination to save souls. This determination meant that

the facts about man's (and the child's) sinful condition and ultimate fate are never hidden or diluted. While Bunyan and Watts make some steps forward in recognizing the worth of delighting their readers, they both agreed with Janeway that in the end children were better taking the precautionary steps of abject repentance than they were in playing with toys. It is interesting to note that in the didactic writing of the late 1700's, toys are given considerable attention. The Edgeworths devote one chapter of Practical Education to the discussion of children's toys. Edgeworth and her contemporaries shared with the Puritans a certain caution about the use of toys, but their caution was based on educational theory about the kinds of toys which are most suitable for children rather than on a religious boycotting of instruments of pleasure which might distract the child from his eternal goal.

While Puritan children's books progressed from being strictly didactic to incorporating delight into moral and spiritual instruction, their understanding of the child was constant. The pre-eighteenth century mind perceived man's image to be negative, born in sin and condemned to everlasting fire. Without a doubt, this understanding of the universe was grounded in Scripture. Much of the writing of Janeway, Bunyan and Watts found its beginning in specific Bible verses. While the concept of original sin is a Biblical one (Psalm 51:5), Scripture does present an image of man as saint as well as sinner. But the Puritans persisted in believing that, while the Kingdom of God might be for children (Matt.19:14), children were in constant jeopardy of another fate.

This negative view of mankind was based on an equally negative image of God. Janeway, Bunyan and Watts perceived their Creator to be a God of Wrath and Justice, easily angered and stingy about forgiveness. Janeway's Sarah Howley is afraid to make "a" mistake, after six years of almost flawless existence, because she had to face an angry God at the gates to eternity (7). Bunyan relates God to an Executioner in his meditation on a fig-tree, an executioner who is running out of patience and who will not hesitate to use his power to curse if the tree does not bear fruit (43). In Song XIII, Watts envisions an angry, moody God whose love may turn to fury,

> What if the Lord grow wroth, and swear
> While I refuse to read and pray,
> That he'll refuse to lend an Ear,
> To all my Groans another Day? (14)

All three conceded that God as Creator was good, fashioning and sustaining nature. Likewise, they concede that God loves the creation, in order to arrange for its redemption through Christ, His Son. In spite of this, the overwhelming image of God is harsh and stern. The Comforter, the Brother and the Friend images of Scripture have no place. In Song XXI Watts speaks of sick sheep who infect the flock, but he neglects to mention either a Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11), or a Shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine behind in order to find the one lost, perhaps sick sheep. Bunyan's analogies for God involve inanimate objects, such as trees and candles, rather than parallels to gentleness and mercy. Janeway speaks of God in formal tones, except when he speaks through his childish examples. Jesus is 'dear' and 'sweet' to Sarah Howley, but

even more than that, He is the one who holds her uncertain eternal future in the balance. Janeway makes reference to a book of his own sermons called "The best Friend in the worst times," but it is a tool of conversion rather than a comfort to lost souls. And so, while the Puritans had the best intentions--soul-saving intentions--their understanding of the sinful nature of the child demanded that children be educated solely in the ways of the church. Play time, secular instruction and delight all paled in comparison to everlasting fire.

II. Changing Views of the Child: Rousseau and the Edgeworths

The conceptualization of man as inherently evil which existed prior to the eighteenth century was guided by the church. Man was at the mercy of nature and turned to religion and the church in order to understand life's inconsistencies. With industrialization man was able to explain certain natural phenomena through scientific means. It was through this scientific thinking in part that children's literature was removed from the stranglehold of church doctrine. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's greatest achievement in educational theory was that he was able to suggest an alternative view of the nature of man to the writers of children's literature who followed him. Rousseau, along with Johan Comenius and John Locke, was the forerunner of modern behavioral sciences. Margaret Gillespie explains that:

> Researchers in the field of child growth and development have delineated ontogenetic stages of growth from conception through maturity. This knowledge of the biological development of the individual with its psychological concomitants has had tremendous impact on patterns and practices in child rearing in the home, in the school, and in the community. Children have a place in society which is uniquely their own. They are not viewed as miniature adults, devils, or angels, but rather as growing individuals whose behaviours and abilities are determined in large measure by the interaction of environmental and hereditary factors as they move along the growth continuum. (23)

Rousseau's image of man is made perfectly clear in the first sentence of Emile (1762): "God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil" (5). Rousseau explains that "the impulses of nature are always right; there is no original sin in the human heart, the how and why of the entrance of every vice can be traced"

(56). More significantly, Rousseau separates the nature of God from the nature of man when he insists that "Reason alone teaches us to know good and evil" (34). Reason is the product of a good education, an education based upon experience. For Rousseau the process of life is one of learning and growing, becoming a better man through the experiences encountered, not through the prayer and repentance of the Puritans. The experience that Rousseau speaks of is one that "precedes instruction" (29). According to Rousseau, society, and particularly its institutions, such as the church, have "enfeebled man" (48). Reason is the product of education and, he argues quite convincingly, I think, that reasoning with children is "exceedingly silly," because if children knew how to reason they would not need to be educated (53). It follows then that if reason is the means by which man distinguishes between good and evil, and he is unable to reason until he has completed his education, then attempting to teach the child about good and evil is a rather futile exercise. Rousseau claims that "before the age of reason we do good or ill without knowing it, and there is no morality in our actions" (34). Reason supercedes the power of the Almighty. This view is radically different from that of the Puritans; it led the way to a freer, more tolerant attitude about children and their educational needs.

The moral tale was the prevalent style for children's writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It was influenced by both the earlier Puritan literature and the educational theories of Rousseau. Since several of these writers claimed to be, at least in part, disciples of Rousseau it is interesting to note Rousseau's comments on moral lessons.

> Most of the moral lessons which are and can be given may be reduced to this formula:
>
> Master. You must not do that.
> Child. Why not?
> Master. Because it is wrong.
> Child. Wrong! What is wrong?
> Master. What is forbidden you.
> Child. Why is it wrong to do what is forbidden?
> Master. You will be punished for disobedience.
> Child. I will do it when no one is looking.
> Master. We shall watch you.
> Child. I will hide.
> Master. We shall ask you what you are doing.
> Child. I shall tell a lie.
> Master. You must not tell lies.
> Child. Why must not I tell lies?
> Master. Because it is wrong, etc.
>
> That is the inevitable circle. Go beyond it and the child will not understand you. (54)

The above example is given by Rousseau to prove that reason should not be used with children. Reasoning with children is conversing with them in a language which they do not understand; it tends to make children, who are "satisfied with words, question all that is said to them" and "become argumentative and rebellious" (53). The above argument does not allow the child to be natural and to learn by experience. It instructs and, in the end, destroys reason--the final product of education.

Rousseau provided inspiration for writers such as Maria Edgeworth, who removed children's literature from the realm of the church and established reason as the ultimate goal of education. As revolutionary as his ideas were, in some cases they replaced one brand of silliness with another. While there is nothing like the terror of Janeway in Emile, the tutor, who was to become a role model for so many of the teachers in nineteenth century children's literature, demonstrates a significant amount of mean-spiritedness. He is an

automaton who lacks emotion, and seems to encourage Emile's failures. The tutor has an enormous sense of power over the child, who according to Rousseau lacks judgment. His experiments (lessons) are invariably manipulative; in Emile experience is sometimes as hard a task master as was the fear of damnation in the Puritan tales.

As with any philosopher, Rousseau's theories survived and were passed down to modern generations in a piece-meal fashion. While Rousseau provided many new insights into the education of children, some of his ideas were strange, and quickly pushed aside. It is a wonderful irony that the modern education system, an institution at best, is founded on the principles of a man who abhorred institutions. These kinds of paradoxes exist throughout Emile. The much-copied tutor grew up in a society Emile needs to be removed from, and the author of the book which espouses parental involvement in the rearing of children sent all five of his children to foundling homes.

The Edgeworths

Except for Thomas Day, perhaps, the Edgeworths owe the greatest debt to Rousseau for inspiring their theory of education. Aside from being close readers of Rousseau, Thomas Day and Richard Lovell Edgeworth may be the only two people who swallowed Rousseau's theories whole enough to actually try to put his theories into practice (Day by educating a wife, and Richard Lovell by educating his first-born, Richard Jr.). For Richard Lovell, and especially for Richard Jr., the experiment was a resounding flop--even Rousseau seemed to agree with that. Because of this failure, Richard Lovell developed his own ideas about education which he was able to perfect

with his nineteen children. Maria, born in 1768, was to join her father in espousing these theories of education, first in Practical Education and then in numerous stories for children. Maria was to Richard Lovell what Emile was to Rousseau. Richard Lovell took Maria into partnership on a work of education which proclaimed reason and parental influence above all other factors. Yet Maria herself, the second born, grew up away from home and the influence of her parents in the austere surroundings of several girls' academies. There seems to be little doubt she grew up craving the attention and good will of her father. While at school Maria was a natural storyteller. Interestingly enough, one of her best-loved stories was about "a mask made from the dried skin taken from a dead man's face, which he put on when he wished to be disguised, and which he at other times kept buried at the foot of a tree" (Lawless 9). In his correspondence with Maria, Richard Lovell encouraged her storytelling, although he preferred a more natural, reasonable subject and a more instructive style.

The extent of Richard Lovell's influence on Maria is a much debated issue. Richard Lovell has been described as Maria's sinister alter ego, as a bluebeard, and a pompous bore who inflicted his notions of utilitarian education on a seemingly mute and helpless Maria. Critics debate whether his influence on her writing was a positive force, or a restrictive, killing one. While several give Richard Lovell credit for genuine creative inspiration, the weight of critical opinion invariably credits Edgeworth Senior with all of the flaws in Maria's books. He is usually assigned the blame for the didactic moralizing which is ever present in Maria's books. Mark

Hawthorne, in Doubt and Dogma in Maria Edgeworth, goes as far as suggesting that Maria was plagued by doubts about the deadened didactic approach of her father to life. Her doubts led her to undermine insidiously all of her novels with romantic notions of passion and imagination. There is, I think, no doubt about the fact that Richard Lovell exerted a powerful influence on the thoughts and writings of his daughter Maria. It is mistaken, however, to view Maria as a helpless puppet at the mercy of her father, the puppet master. It is equally mistaken to view Richard Lovell as some sort of black force. Edgeworth was a truly scientific man who offered many ideas of significance to the Lunar Society. He won several awards for his contributions to the Society of Arts, and he offered many ideas to both the design and construction of vehicles and to the invention of the telegraph. Maria welcomed his opinions. The many family letters prove sufficiently that Maria had a mind of her own, and while she revered and respected her father, she participated in lively debate with him, debate which was on-going and between peers, not the debate which ends in the submission of the student to the master.

Since this thesis is concerned with Maria's children's books, I suggest that a brief comparison between the prefaces which Richard Lovell and Maria wrote for those children's books is perhaps the best way to determine whether the notions of education and child-rearing, the ideas of justice, truth and humanity were shared ideas, equally owned by father and daughter, or whether Maria simply submitted her work to her father's critique to maintain his love and affection. Until his death in 1817, Richard Lovell wrote all of the prefaces to Maria's books. In response to her publisher's request to write new

prefaces to editions of her books published after her father's death, Maria wrote:

> In truth I have nothing to say to them but what my dear father has said for me in his prefaces to each of them as they came out. These sufficiently explain the moral design; they require no national explanations, and I have nothing personal to add. As a woman, my life, wholly domestic, cannot afford anything interesting to the public: I am like the "needy knifegrinder" -- I have no story to tell. (August 1847, to Messrs. Simpkin and Marshall)

This letter has been used by many to prove that Maria was entirely under the influence of her father's ideas when she wrote her children's books. Elizabeth Harden suggests that in Early Lessons, Moral Tales and Popular Tales, written primarily to illustrate the principles of Practical Education, the ideas were largely Edgeworth's but the fiction for adults is another matter (Maria Edgeworth 19). While I agree with Harden's conclusions about the nature of Richard Lovell's influence over Maria (discussed later), I would argue that though the ideas presented in Practical Education were initially conceived by Richard Lovell, they were ideas that Maria perpetuated of her own free will and because she was convinced of their truth, not solely because she knew that they would please her father or, in later life, her family. For her children's stories as well as for her novels, I suggest "the didacticisms, characteristic of most of the fiction, seems to be peculiarly Maria's own" (Harden Maria Edgeworth 19).

Richard Lovell Edgeworth's prefaces were written at his daughter's request. In the preface to Practical Education he is very meticulous about recording who wrote what, and who is responsible for

what ideas. This is not a divisive measure, but merely answers a question which he believes readers will find natural "to enquire what share belongs to each of them" (I,ix). And so we are told that Richard Lovell conceived the design of the work twenty years previously and that he wrote the chapters on Tasks, Grammar and Classical Literature, Geography, Chronology, Arithmetic, Geometry and Mechanics, that Lovell E. wrote the "sketch of an Introduction to Chemistry," and that the rest of the book was written by Maria. Although Honora, Richard's second wife, did not actually write any of Practical Education, her ideas were credited not only in the preface, but with a full accounting in a lengthy Appendix attached to the book. It seems apparent to me that, if after this kind of documentation in Practical Education, Richard Lovell had truly been responsible for the ideas espoused in Maria's children's books, he would not have hesitated to say so. The opposite appears to be true. While he openly acknowledges that the books were written to illustrate the opinions of Practical Education, he takes no credit for them, other than to compliment their excellency in achieving that task. And so, while Maria did not actually write the words "justice, truth, and humanity" which title this thesis (they were written in the preface to The Parent's Assistant), they were ideas she upheld in her writing.

Maria's prefaces to Frank and Harry and Lucy (sequels to Early Lessons) are verbose compared to her father's earlier prefaces. Richard Lovell had been content to summarize some of the plots and purposes of the stories and to espouse some basic ideas about their philosophy of education--encouraging virtue by showing its rewards, and being aware of the temptations encountered by children. Maria

expresses the same concern for amusing children while teaching them virtues, contrasted to corresponding vices. She demonstrates a keen understanding of the nature of children when she claims that children more readily learn from each other than they do from teachers because they pay better attention to their peers (Harry and Lucy), and she appears equally concerned with ensuring the parent's education as well as the child's. Her preface to Frank quite bluntly indicates to parents the error of their ways, and chides them for being "content to do nothing" (vii) about their children's education. Her preface to Harry and Lucy is in many ways a requiem to her father. She credits him with beginning Harry and Lucy, and owns that she writes it not only to complete Early Lessons but to do justice to the completion of his plan, which she "thought too valuable to be abandoned" (viii). While she initiates the preface with these comments and by talking about her father's goals, she concludes the preface by talking about her hopes and purposes for the book.

Father and daughter shared a concern to entertain and keep the attention of the child, to maintain a balance between recognizing the existence of vice and actually performing it, and to avoid "inflaming" the imagination. All of their prefaces were written to parents to point out the didactic value of the lessons learned. The one exception to this was Maria's preface to Little Plays for Children. As I will discuss in Chapter IV, Little Plays was a notable exception to much of her work. This preface addresses both children and parents, and is dramatic in style. The preface is written about prefaces and about authorial preoccupations. It is short, comic and delightfully different from her other prefaces. It shares with them,

though, the philosophy that children's books should be entertaining, and that children are the only acceptable judges of entertainment. Should the child fail to view the work as entertaining then neither the opinion of the parent nor the opinion or goals of the author can change that. It is for young readers to determine whether they--and only they--can pronounce the label which the author most wishes to add, "WARRANTED ENTERTAINING" (295).

With Harden, I believe that Maria "was more influenced by what Edgeworth had taught her about character and conduct, and the examples of family and friends, than by the intellectual stimulus of what she read" (Maria Edgeworth 19). I would also concur with Marilyn Butler who suggested that she used her writing as a means to continue intimacy with her father and her family. While these statements may be true, Maria was not simply the mouthpiece of her father. Finally, while Richard Lovell collaborated with her, listened to her, shared his opinions with her, and generally influenced her greatly, he did not think for her, nor did he encourage her to set aside her ideas in favour of his own.

Practical Education

Practical Education (1798) was the result of many years of home education in the Edgeworth household. It was the combined effort of Richard Senior and Maria, with help from Maria's brother Lovell and her stepmother Honora. The treatise contained the Edgeworth philosophy of education; they were careful at first to indicate that their essays were neither a system, nor an attempt to uphold or refute any peculiar system. Perhaps the most indicative phrase that the

Edgeworths use to describe their philosophy is "education of the heart" (I,vi). Their aim was to "induce useful and agreeable habits, well regulated sympathy, and benevolent affections" (I,vii). These attributes were to be taught through experience and experiment, not through instruction. The Edgeworths were firm in their decision to remain silent on the subject of religion, even though they were severely criticized for it by their contemporaries. In the Advertisement to the second edition, they respond to this criticism, claiming that children learn religion from their parents, from the Bible, and from the many religious books given to them. They question whether anything can be added, and doubt that any thoughts they might have on the matter would meet with "general approbation" (xi). While they maintain their silence, they do "disavow in explicit terms the design of laying down a system of Education, founded upon morality exclusive of Religion" (xii). In view of the preceding Puritan notions of education, it is interesting to note that for the Edgeworths, as for many of their contemporaries, religion is assuming personal and private proportions, while education--ideals and values (as contrasted to instruction)--are universal and above sectarian squabbling.

Practical Education represents a philosophy designed for children of "higher classes of society" (xiv). It stresses quality of education over quantity and is a textbook for parents, not children. The book discusses in excruciating detail an enormous range of topics: toys, servants, books, grammar, arithmetic, mechanics and chemistry. It also tackles the more nebulous issues of temper, truth, sympathy, pride and prudence. In demonstrating how these subjects may be taught

to children the Edgeworths reflect an understanding of the child which is radically different from that of many of their contemporaries and most of their predecessors. They assume the child is innately good, and that his instincts about education should be supreme. In the section on toys they admonish parents:

> An infant should never be interrupted in its operations; whilst it wishes to use its hands, we should not be impatient to make it walk, nor when it is pacing with all the attention to its centre of gravity that is exerted by a rope dancer, suddenly arrest its progress, and insist upon its pronouncing the scanty vocabulary which we have compelled it to learn. (I,9)

Children should let their natural curiosity lead them to experience, uninterrupted by parents, the playful and the painful parts of their world. Parents should remove from their path any things which can truly hurt the child but should not be "cowardly" about letting the child tumble or burn its fingers. In this way the child will learn the use of its limbs and its senses without becoming accustomed to hearing words like "don't do that!" This concept of education is identical to Rousseau's where experience reigns and reason is not a method of education but the end result.

The need to educate the child on his/her own level of understanding and without taxing his/her attention span is an important principle in the Edgeworths' philosophy. Only by observing this principle can the ultimate maxim for their educational philosophy be reached: "that we should associate pleasure with whatever we wish that our pupils should pursue, and pain with whatever we wish that they should avoid" (II,713). If lessons or tasks are not to be associated with sorrow or pain, they must not

fatigue or disgust the child. The child's curiosity must be maintained. In order for this to happen the parent or tutor must restrain his own desire for the student to understand issues and lessons immediately. The tutor must be patient and allow, through repetition, for the gradual understanding of important lessons. The master must avoid pressing the child to memorize words and principles which he cannot understand. To this end, while the principles of justice, charity and humanity (results of education, not gifts of nature [I,56]) are of ultimate importance, they are principles which are best avoided in early lessons. Children are early taught to speak of things which they do not fully comprehend. When questioned, "the pretended extent of their knowledge will sink into a narrow compass; nor will their virtues, which have never seen service, be ready for action" (I,71). The notion that each child is diverse and grows at his/her own speed is essential to the Edgeworths' concept of educating each child on his/her own level of understanding. This principle is especially important when teaching the child about science and scientific principles. If the child appears to be dull, or not capable of understanding such principles, that is the fault of the master, not the student.

The master or parent in Practical Education is a paragon of virtue. But unlike Rousseau's tutor, this master is required to teach by a set of standards, and is encouraged to admit ignorance when appropriate (I,117). It is the master's responsibility to earn the respect of the student. If the master can demonstrate superior knowledge in a pleasing manner to the child, then the child will voluntarily give the master his/her attention when he speaks (I,102).

All of this must be done without lying to or deceiving the child in any way. In the chapter "Truth," Rousseau is criticized for counselling parents to teach truth through falsehood. Rousseau and other educators claimed that deceptions were fair means of education for preceptors who duped, surprised and cheated their students into virtue. The Edgeworths were especially appalled by Rousseau's method of ensuring that Emile would not walk the streets of Paris alone (I,177). They advise parents vociferously:

> There should be no moral delusions; no artificial course of experience; no plots laid by parents to make out the truth; no listening fathers, mothers, or governesses; no pretended confidence, or perfidious friends; in one word, no falsehood should be practiced. (I,192)

The final task of the master is one of balancing the teaching of educational principles. Tutors should address the child on his/her own level, but never speak nonsense or inaccurately (I,102); never bore the student while not acceding to the child's demand for certain styles of education (I,140); and teach prudence and economy but keep "hearts open to the pleasure of generosity" (II,711).

While the Edgeworths keenly criticized Rousseau, they nevertheless shared many of his notions on education. For both, the practical side of education was not to be neglected. Whenever possible the student was to experience lessons and think for her/himself. For both, reason was the ultimate goal of education, for it was to be the guide "to our conduct of life" (II,647). Earlier I quoted a section from Rousseau, where he demonstrated the ineffectiveness of reasoning with a child before he is capable of understanding basic concepts. It is interesting to compare that with

a section in Practical Education which I believe Rousseau would have endorsed. It demonstrates the effective use of logic with a student who understands, and has experienced, the basic concepts behind the lesson.

> M-. "We should avoid what gives us pain."
> S-. "Yes, to be sure."
> M-. "Whatever burns us gives us pain."
> S-. "Yes, that it does."
> M-. "We should then avoid whatever burns us."
> To this conclusion S- heartily assented, for he had just recovered from the pain of a burn.
> M-. "Fire burns us."
> S-. "Yes, I know that."
> M-. "We should then avoid fire."
> S-. "Yes."
> This hasty yes was extorted from the boy by the mode of interrogatory; but he soon perceived his mistake.
> M-. "We should avoid fire. What when we are very cold?"
> S-. "Oh no; I meant to say, that we should avoid a certain degree of fire. We should not go too near the fire. We should not go so near as to burn ourselves."
> Children who have but little experience frequently admit assertions to be true in general, which are only true in particular instances; and this is often attributed to their want of judgment: it should be attributed to their want of experience. Experience, and nothing else, can rectify these mistakes: if we attempt to correct them by words, we shall merely teach our pupils to argue about terms, not to reason. (II,674/5)

This could very easily have been written by Rousseau. "We should avoid what gives us pain," does not equal "You must not do that" for the sole reason that the student has experienced pain, and his experience teaches him not to repeat the lesson. If the student had not experienced pain, then his response to the statement "We should avoid what gives us pain" might very well be "Why?"

The process of education is a gradual experiential learning of judgment, and judgment is the ability to use reason and logic in order

to discern good from evil, in order to live by the principles of justice, truth and humanity. Should parents follow the principles of Practical Education, the authors promise that

> the hours devoted to the instruction of a family, will not be thrown away. If parents have the patience to wait for their reward, that reward will far surpass their most sanguine expectations: they will find in their children agreeable companions, sincere and affectionate friends. Whether they live in retirement, or in the busy world, they will feel their interest in life increase, their pleasures multiplied by sympathy with their beloved pupils; they will have a happy home. (II,729)

It appears as if many parents and educators took this promise to heart, and attempted to educate their children by the principles demonstrated in Practical Education. The family letters indicate at least one girls' academy that was run following Practical Education, and Charlotte Yonge in her letters indicates that she was raised at home according to the Edgeworth system. Practical Education was one of the few books on pedagogy produced in its day, and it was regarded highly. It outlived the "evangelically inspired educational writings of their contemporaries" (Colby 139), and many of its notions about education survive to the present day. Just recently I was reminded of the Edgeworths' enthusiasm for science and scientific experimentation and discovery. Several radio announcements have been produced on behalf of Science, Technology and Industry in Canada, which encourage ordinary listeners to embrace the technology of the twenty-first century, instead of avoiding it in fear. Maria, in her preface to Harry and Lucy exhibited the same enthusiasm for the future that science allows us: "In science, the hope of future discoveries, and

the ambition to invent, are great, natural, and never-failing excitements to young and old" (xii).

Marilyn Butler suggests that some readers may be disappointed that a greater awareness of the industrial landscape which developed around her did not pervade or change Maria Edgeworth's novels. Her novels neither describe the scene nor provide any sort of social comment about it. "When confronted with the technological miracles of her day she seems to have been genuinely puzzled as to what her response should be. Should she marvel at the achievements of science? Or should she recoil, as well she might, at the dirt, the noise, and the inhuman scale of it all?" (Butler, 143). While Edgeworth made no reference to industrialization in her novels, she does refer to it in her letters. Writing to Mary Sneyd about a visit to a quarry she says:

> Upon the whole I was much more pleased than I had expected. I was actually silenced with admiration of the sublime in nature and art. I was astonished that art could appear sublime in the midst of the sublimity of nature. (31 March 1813)

Maria Edgeworth embraced the scientific thinking which was revolutionizing the society in which she lived. While she left the mechanical details of natural science to her father in all her stories, she thought scientifically about education. Reason, good judgment and fairness were human qualities that could be learned systematically and through observation, experimentation and induction. Edgeworth combined this scientific perspective with a strong sense of religion, but doctrine for her was a private personal choice. Religion, then, is rarely referred to in her children's stories (i.e.

Harry and Lucy and their parents go to church), but her letters reveal a deep personal commitment to a much friendlier Almighty being than the Puritans describe. Especially when she speaks of dying she evokes images of God--not out of desperation but out of comfort. The following two sections from her letters reveal her understanding of God:

> When I felt that it was more than probable that I should not recover, with a pulse above a hundred and twenty, and at the entrance of my seventy-sixth year, I was not alarmed. I felt ready to rise tranquil from the banquet of life, where I had been a happy guest; I confidently relied on the goodness of my Creator. (January 1843 to a friend)

> I am not in the least melancholy or apprehensive--or unprepared or afraid of dying. . . . As to the rest, I am truly resigned and trust to the goodness of my Creator living or dying. (January 1844 to Mrs. Edgeworth)

Edgeworth's quiet faith and commitment to rational thinking were perceived by her contemporaries to be serious flaws in her writing. Nevertheless, they admired her and her work, and praised her moral writing as most worthy.

While Maria Edgeworth embraced the causes of great change in her society and looked forward with never-failing excitement to future discoveries, her contemporaries were more traditional and far more conservative in their viewpoint. Hannah More, Anna Barbauld, Sarah Trimmer and Mary Sherwood embraced scientific thinking with varying degrees of enthusiasm. They shared a banner-waving commitment to the church and to religion. Divine interpretation was the means by which they understood and explained their world--religion, for them, was neither private nor personal. It was necessary and of community

concern. As much as their deep religious perspective likened them to the Puritans, they were neither backward nor afraid of change; they actively involved themselves in trying to better the world in which they lived. Their means of improvement were educational and moral, but their prime criterion was religious.

III. THE MORAL TALE: MORE, BARBAULD, TRIMMER AND SHERWOOD

In Search of Cinderella

> Full early trained to worship seemliness,
> This model child is never known
> To mix in quarrels; that were far beneath
> Its dignity; with gifts he bubbles o'er
> As generous as a fountain; selfishness
> May not come near him, nor the little throng
> Of flitting pleasures tempt him from his path;
> (298-304)

> Meanwhile old grandame earth is grieved to find
> The playthings which her love designed for him,
> Unthought of; in their woodland beds the flowers
> Weep, and the river sides are all forlorn,
> Oh! give us once again the wishing cap
> Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat
> Of Jack the Giant-killer, Robin Hood,
> And Sabra in the forest with St. George!
> (The Prelude, Book V, 337-344)

> Mrs. B's and Mrs. Trimmer's nonsense lay in piles about. Knowledge insignificant and vapid as Mrs. B's books convey, it seems, must come to a child in the *shape* of *knowledge*; and his empty noddle must be turned with conceit of his own powers when he has learnt that a Horse is an animal and Billy is better than a Horse, and such like; instead of the beautiful Interest in wild tales, which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child. Science has succeeded to poetry no less in the little walks of children than with men. Is there no possibility of averting this sore evil? Think what you would have been now, if instead of being fed with Tales and old wive's fables in childhood, you had been crammed with geography and natural history! Damn them! I mean the cursed Barbauld Crew, those blights and Blasts of all that is Human in man and child. (23 October 1802, letter from Charles Lamb to S.T. Coleridge)

Wordsworth and Lamb, contemporaries of the first generation of writers of the moral tale, shared with many others strong feelings about the destructive force of the moral tale. The proponents of the moral tale, however, held a common interest in the education of

children, exerting all of their authorial excellence to mould the characters of young readers, "inform(ing) their minds and guid(ing) their taste" in order to produce the diligent child (Avery 11). These writers shared a concern to improve society through the sharing of factual and moral instruction. As Lamb arraigns them, the moral tales have a self-consciousness and inward gaze which can be interpreted as conceit. Their notions of logic, rationalism and science did not generally allow for fancy or for the lamented fairy tales, which both Lamb and Wordsworth mention. For Wordsworth the moral tale defies nature; for Lamb it robs children of their childhood, and for Paul Hazard--who claimed "let us Flee. There is a whole battalion of these Fearsome Women" (37)--it forms a strong army against which retreat is the only wise strategy of defense.

The writers of the moral tale fell into two groups, one based on religious beliefs and the other on educational theories. The writers of religious moral tales represent the established church. This is the group which Wordsworth, Lamb and Hazard spoke against. They are represented by such writers as Hannah More, Mrs. Barbauld, Mrs. Trimmer and Mrs. Sherwood. As well as writing educational essays and children's books, these women were involved in the Sunday School Movement and Hannah More contributed a great deal of literature in the form of Cheap Repository Tracts. For these women morality was directly related to religion. They adopted the popular form of the moral tale, but in many ways they were throwbacks to the Puritan period where religion, not educational theory, formed the ruling principles. "Their basic tenet was that education must subserve religion and be directed to preparation for the after-life. They

claimed emphatically that the degree of human unhappiness was in direct proportion to the degree of submission to the Divine Will" (Cutt 9).

The rational moralists treated religion more casually, concerning themselves with presenting educational theory in a manner which would produce children who were reasonable, responsible, industrious and resourceful. The Edgeworths were harshly criticized for their lack of religious thought in both Practical Education and in Maria's tales. They claimed that morality was not possible without roots in religion, but they were nevertheless accused of abandoning religion. The Quarterly Review made this judgment:

> we would abstain from pronouncing any decision which should apply to her personality . . . but, as a writer, it must still be considered as a blemish, in the eyes at least of those who think differently, that virtue should be studiously inculcated with scarcely any reference to what they regard as the main spring of it; that vice should be traced to every other source except the want of religious principle; that the most radical change from worthlessness to excellence should be represented as wholly independent of that agent which they consider as the only one that can accomplish it. (xxiv January 1821, 359).

I agree with Marilyn Butler who suggests that this criticism is accurate: "the heroes of Edgeworth's novels do indeed find their own road to salvation, along a route that is rational rather than religious, and owes nothing to external guidance" (Butler 154).

While their views on religion separated the Edgeworths from the Sunday School morality, the two groups did share many of the same principles and goals. And while her contemporaries may have criticized Maria's tales for their lack of religious conviction, the criticism, like Whately's in the Quarterly Review, was not held

against her personally. Moral stories were called tales because their eighteenth century writers shared an abhorrence for the generally degraded habit of novel-reading. Novel-reading at the time was considered to be a depraved habit which produced all sorts of silly, non-rational and non-dutiful habits. Angelina in Edgeworth runs off to the wilds of Wales because of her reprehensible fascination for novels. In another of the Moral Tales an irresponsible governess, Mademoiselle Panache, loses her pupil a husband because she allows her to read novels. Rather than wasting their time on novels, the writers of the moral tales encouraged children to practice obedience and duty. Like the Puritan tales before them, the moral tales were not hesitant about indicating the sometimes grim consequences of actions to children, whether those consequences were religious or practical. Since moral tales were concerned with the improvement of society, their lessons to children were often lessons which advocated some particular position about a social issue. Cruelty to animals, charity to the poor, and anti-slavery were some of the favorite issues of the day and they were often dealt with in children's literature. Aside from trying to teach children characteristics which would make them better citizens, each of these women modelled what they saw as good citizenship. The religious moralists were actively involved in the Sunday School Movement, providing lower class children with the means to read Scripture, and with amusements to keep them off the streets on Sundays. Maria Edgeworth was not involved in the Sunday School Movement, but she was involved in running the family estate in Ireland, and in attempting to help the poor people of her own estate.

In the last chapter I discussed how Maria Edgeworth's work was influenced by the theories of Rousseau. Discussing Rousseau as he influenced More, Barbauld, Trimmer and Sherwood is one way of determining their reaction to the type of scientific thought that was prevalent in their day. There is little doubt that it was Rousseau's theories that influenced the moral tales' concern with experience over instruction, and desire to understand the child as having a childish mind instead of having the mind of a miniature adult. The moral tales reflect a Rousseauian understanding of the child's character development; the tales build one lesson upon another--lessons gleaned from everyday life and through experience. But More, Barbauld, Trimmer and Sherwood criticized Rousseau for having an educational theory devoid of spiritual content. Perhaps without intending to, these writers all disregarded several of the rules which Emile observed. Sylvia Patterson in Rousseau's Emile and Early Children's Literature describes how these moralists broke two of Rousseau's "cardinal" rules:

> 1) they wrote for an audience which Rousseau said was too young to be reading; and 2) they were, in effect, telling children their lessons rather than having the children experience them for themselves. In regard to the first point, all the books included in this study were written for children under fifteen, the age at which Emile is permitted to read. Perhaps Rousseau's delayed reading program for Emile was a result of a lack of suitable material for children to read. In regard to the second point, perhaps Rousseau would have permitted vicarious learning experiences, but again there were no suitable books. (40)

Hannah More abhorred Rousseau because her only goal in writing was to instill religion in her readers. Her Sacred Dramas and her Tracts put her in the same period of didactic writing as her contemporaries. But

the dramas are really not moral tales; they are religious dialogues. Barbauld, Trimmer and Sherwood gave the child credit for having the ability to reason, but nevertheless expected blind obedience. "Don't do that"--the ultimate faux pas in Rousseau--reflects obedience without understanding, a frequent expectation of children in the moral tales.

While these women ignored or spoke out against Rousseau they recognized the changes that industrialization brought. They lamented that those changes often reduced man's dependence on God and the church, but they sought to rectify not the industry and scientific thought which produced the changes, but the religious immorality which they saw as the end result of those changes. The religious moralists, then, shared with Edgeworth a strong sense of social and moral responsibility.

Moral responsibility, as well as a commitment to rational education, caused More, Barbauld, Trimmer, Sherwood, and surprisingly enough, the Edgeworths, to speak out against fairy tales. In 1844 The Quarterly Review listed some children's books judged worth reading. The list includes: Jack and the Beanstalk, Nursery Rhymes, Aesop's Fables, Evenings at Home, The Parent's Assistant, Popular Tales, The History of the Robins, Harry and Lucy, Sacred Dramas, and The Pilgrim's Progress. It is ironic that so many moral tales show up on a list of books which include fairy tales, for the moralists by and large agreed that fairy tales were at best a second class form of entertaining children. The preface to Moral Tales indicates that the fairy tales, developed in the age of the chapbook, were full of "mawkish sensibility" (iii). Mrs. Trimmer in reviewing a book of

nursery tales in 1805, including such well known tales as Cinderella, Blue Beard and Little Red Riding Hood, claims that the tales are not only full of "vulgarities of expression" but that they were improper for children because they terrify them with horrors of imagination. She particularly objects to the plates in the book which graphically portray all sorts of improper images--a floor clotted with blood, devils in frightful shapes and Bluebeard holding his wife by her hair. Mrs. Trimmer concludes her review:

> A moment's consideration will surely be sufficient to convince people of the least reflection, of the danger, as well as the impropriety, of putting such books as these into the hands of little children, whose minds are susceptible of every impression; and who from the liveliness of their imaginations are apt to convert into realities whatever forcibly strikes their fancy. (The Guardian of Education 4 [1805]:74-75)

One shudders to think what Mrs. Trimmer would have had to say about television! Mrs. Sherwood objects to fairy tales as well, but for different reasons than those listed above. According to Sherwood:

> No human being can so much as think a good thought without divine help: all stories, therefore, in which persons are described as acting well without this help, have a most exceedingly evil tendency. But, since it would be wholly absurd to introduce solemn Christian doctrines into fairy-tales; on this account such tales should be sparingly used, it being extremely difficult, if not impossible, from the reason I have specified, to render them generally useful. (The Governess 89)

While these women held in common a cautious disregard for fairy tales, they did concede to some forms of amusement for children. Playtime and toys, not criticized unless they were immoral, were regarded as rational pursuits rather than flights into imagination.

Edgeworth then shared some common opinions about certain issues with her fellow writers. But a closer study of the literature of Hannah More, Anna Barbauld, Sarah Trimmer and Mary Sherwood will provide a contemporary contrast to the work of Maria Edgeworth. Janeway, Bunyan and Watts produced literature which was highly religious and instructive in nature. This was the legacy which all of the moral writers inherited. More, Barbauld, Trimmer and Sherwood made many improvements to the literature offered to children. They abandoned the Puritan notion of the reprehensible miniature adult in favour of the late-eighteenth-century understanding of the child as in the process of development. Morality is demonstrated through plot development, characterization and setting. These elements make the moral tales more readable, and soften the blows of religious doctrine which still fall. While they made enhancements to the literature provided for children, these writers willingly chained themselves to the constrictive force of church doctrine. Amusement was always of secondary importance to religious instruction. It was not until Maria Edgeworth wrote that children's literature was freed from the constraints that the religious moralists had placed on it.

Hannah More

Hannah More was perhaps the most impassioned of the rational moralists. She and her four sisters were actively involved in the Sunday School Movement, and most of her ideas of education were developed by working with girls' schools. Perhaps her most-known work is the Cheap Repository Tracts, which she wrote for lower class adults, but which were quickly absorbed by children. One of the most

popular of these tracts, The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, leaves the reader no doubt as to its aims: to instruct people to thank God for whatever position he has placed them in, and be content with the status quo. The incredibly pious and religious shepherd might have been a good father for Sarah Howley. He is happy with overcast weather because "it will be such weather as shall please God, and whatever pleases Him always pleases me" (10). Regarding the state of his poverty, the shepherd says "I wonder all working men do not derive as great joy and delight as I do in thinking how God has honored poverty" (13). While the tracts were read by many, they were obviously self-serving and led to the same type of religiosity that is prevalent in later evangelical literature, where religion may be available to the lower classes, but the established church is not.

The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain was highly religious and full of Scripture references. The shepherd rarely speaks without either quoting or making some allusion to Scripture, or at least his understanding of it. It hardly seems possible to find a more religious work for children, and yet Hannah More in her Sacred Dramas, the work she intended for children, produces a set of dramatic readings which are strictly embellished paraphrases of the Bible stories they take their names from. In her Advertisement to the dramas she claims not to have introduced any persons of her own creation (except in Daniel) and to have only placed characters and situations in a manner which did not appear "unnatural" to her. She excuses both her artistry and the reality of the dramas with these comments: "I rather aspired after moral instruction than the purity of dramatic composition", and "I was more anxious in consulting the

advantage of my youthful readers by leading them on in higher religious views than in securing to myself the reputation of critical exactness" (75). This aim, for More, justifies leaving out portions of the Bible stories which she feels would introduce unnecessary passions to her youthful readers, as well as embellishing those sections where the moral lesson is, in its original state, not exact enough. The Sacred Dramas deal with these four Scripture stories: Moses in the Bullrushes, David and Goliath, Belshazzar, and Daniel. While they are perhaps not award-winning stories in the modern day, a look through any current Bible story material for children will still resurrect these four tales, leading to an acknowledgement of More's instincts about both the interest level the stories have for children and her understanding of the sorts of moral and religious lessons involved. Many evangelicals today appear to agree with her.

There is little doubt that More intended her young readers to be entertained while learning "the love of piety and virtue" (75). The dramatic form was one way of giving these moral and spiritual lessons interest for young readers. They were criticized by one contemporary as "The Holy Dramas of Miss Hannah More/Where all the Nine and little Moses snore" (Hopkins 102). The dramas did, however, have some redeeming features. While Daniel, the figure of virtue in one of the dramas was without any life or interest of his own, he is surrounded by characters who are full of passion and have enough flaws to provide real human interest. Daniel's conversations with Araspes are vaguely catechetical in nature, although Araspes requires only to believe in facts he already knows. The moral lesson of the story is to lay to rest Araspes' doubts, particularly his question of "why the ungodly

prosper" (103). More perceived this question to have some interest to all young readers. She has no dying saints in her books; rather she has young Christians armoured for the fight. Araspes has his doubts settled and faith wins over any seeming prosperity of wickedness.

There is a deadly earnestness about More that would seem at odds with her entertainment aim. It is the same earnestness that made the Puritans believe that play was the tool of the Devil. Perhaps this sobriety caused her lack of popularity with critics of her own day and ours; Gillian Avery claims it is inconceivable for anyone to collapse with emotional strain at viewing one of More's Dramas, as Dorothy Kilner would have us believe in Anecdotes of a Boarding School (Avery 35). Whether she was well received by the critics or not, More apparently appealed to parents and young readers, for Sacred Dramas boasted nineteen editions and one translation, in the evangelical tradition, to the language of a foreign and heathen land. Critical opinion today suggests that Hannah More sacrificed her genius at the altar of her religious conviction. Whether this is true or not remains an unanswerable question. That she was in good company in doing so, there is little doubt.

Anna Laetitia Barbauld

Hannah More was popular at the booksellers, but she was not loudly acclaimed by either the critics or her contemporaries. Anna Laetitia Barbauld on the other hand generated quite a lot of opinion from critics and contemporaries alike. The opinion of her was and remains mixed. Lamb saw Barbauld as the head of a "crew" of moralists who destroyed the wild and wonderful notions of childhood by filling

"empty noddles" full of insignificant and vapid scientific knowledge. Wordsworth lamented her model child and Coleridge, Walpole and Johnson all made waspish comments. Conversely, Thackeray and Hazlitt remembered reading her books as children with pleasure. Certainly Mrs. Barbauld was well thought of by other rational and religious moralists. The Edgeworths speak highly of her in Practical Education, although they temper their praise with some criticism. In an 1825 letter to Mrs. Ruxton, Maria Edgeworth mourns Barbauld's death and compliments her work as combining "a melancholy elegance and force of thought," which results in "classical purity" (15 March 1825). Maria Edgeworth modelled The Parent's Assistant after Barbauld's Lessons for Children. Likewise, Sarah Trimmer used Barbauld as a model in writing her Easy Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature. In The Guardian of Education Trimmer proclaims herself

> ready to ascribe great merit to that ingenious lady Mrs. Barbauld, for introducing a species of writing, in the style of familiar conversation, which is certainly much better suited to the capacities of young children than any that preceded it; and the infant readers are further indebted to her for the happy thoughts of printing first books, in a large clear type. These useful hints given by Mrs. Barbauld have been generally adopted by her contemporaries, and many books have been supplied to the nursery, by means of which children at an early age have acquired the rudiments of useful science, and even of the first principles of Christianity, with delight to themselves, and ease to their instructors. ("Observations on the Changes which have taken place in Books for Children and Young Persons," 1802)

Mrs. Barbauld was responsible, as Trimmer suggests, for several improvements in the art of children's education. Her practical improvements in the method of printing and presenting children's

literature in ways which were easily read and more appealing to the childish eye, was a genuine improvement which she shared with her contemporaries. Hannah More, while writing books for children, obviously addressed older children who are really miniature adults. Barbauld is the first to address herself to small children. She defies Rousseau's principles of child readership by disregarding his advice not to allow Emile to read until he has reached fifteen years of age. Mrs. Barbauld designed Lessons for Children for children from two years old and up. That she is successful in rendering these changes is seen in the number of her contemporaries who model her books for children. Mrs. Barbauld certainly lives up to Lamb's comments about filling empty noddles. She is nothing if not incessantly instructive. Her children are constantly learning and being instructed about useful information, for she was too impatient to allow Rousseau's notions of experience to teach the child. Her tutors and parents are definitely instructors.

In 1778 Anna Barbauld published Lessons for Children, which was originally intended for her nephew and adopted son Charles. Written in four parts, which see the child through from toddler to teen, the lessons aimed to fill what Barbauld saw as a gap in children's education: "there is not one adapted to the comprehension of a child from two to three years old" (1). They also boasted the improvements of several great defects in books published for children: that is, they were printed on good paper with large, clear type and large spaces. Because her book was printed for small children, the first notable difference between Barbauld and her predecessors is her diction. The first part of the book is written in language just short

of baby talk. Short sentences, numerous questions and very simple direct commands ensure that even the child of two or three can understand the book. The situations in the lessons all revolve around every day life, and natural examples. While there often seem to be great leaps from one subject to the next, there is a type of circular logic involved which connects the things of nature with facts about life that the child should learn.

> Do not throw your bread upon the ground.
> Bread is to eat, you must not throw it away.
> Corn makes bread.
> Corn grows in the fields.
> Grass grows in the fields.
> Cows eat grass, and sheep eat grass, and horses eats grass.
> Little boys do not eat grass; no, they eat bread and milk. (3)

While Charles makes occasional appearances, the first part is written primarily from the adult's point of view. The adult figure, while instructive and still firm, is nevertheless loving and gentle, unlike the adults seen in children's literature prior to this. The lessons range from animals in the fields to days of the week to easy scientific principles. Interestingly enough, they are not religious in content.

The next three parts of the Lessons demonstrate the same type of principles as the first, but they are written for a child who is growing progressively older. The diction changes and words are no longer so simple, nor sentences so short. Since the child is more capable, the lessons depend on the progression of one thought to the next. Charles becomes less mute in these parts, but the role that he assumes is that of pupil and not of little boy. Charles learns

lessons not from experience but from the explanations of his tutor. Stories and fables become part of the way in which Charles learns facts and how to relate what nature does to his duty in life. While most of the lessons are more light-hearted than we have seen up until now, Barbauld does not avoid teaching Charles about death or about the consequences of his actions. Thus when little boys in Lessons play pranks, they do so with sometimes tragic results; for example, tying grass across the pathway leads to tripping the surgeon, who is running to save their own father's life.

Hymns in Prose, published in 1781, was Barbauld's contribution to religious morality in children's books. The Hymns were written not to expound on church doctrine but to initiate children at a very early age to a devotional life. They are written in prose to avoid lowering verse form to the capacities of a child, but like Bunyan's and Watts' verses they were intended for easy memorization and recital. It was her belief that children should be taught about God almost immediately and that they should never remember a time when they had no such ideas of God. Her goal was:

> To impress them by connecting religion with a variety of sensible objects; with all that he sees, all he hears, all that affects his young mind with wonder or delight; and thus by deep, strong, and permanent associations to lay the best foundation for practical devotion in future life. (vi)

This aim matches very closely the aim of Bunyan and Watts to help the child be reminded of God in every aspect of his life and of nature. The Hymns are filled with thanksgivings and with generally more comforting images than the Puritans' verse. She speaks of the kind Shepherd of all shepherds, and the wise Parent of parents, and the

sovereign King of kings. Her conclusion is that God is all of these things and that we will love Him and obey Him.. Hymn III ends on that note, not suggesting the consequences if we do not happen to love Him or obey Him. Some of her hymns do suggest a sterner image of God: God, like the lion, has a terrible anger and "He could make us die in a moment" (18). But gone are the terrifying threats of eternal damnation and the visions of a justice-seeking God. The later Hymns lament the death and evil in the world that spoil God's work, but the end result is not divine retribution but Jesus conquering death and giving the child immortality (96). The final Hymn is Barbauld's vision of a happy Heaven, something the Puritans could never be assured of, and her Hymns end on a happy note, with hope and joy instead of repentance and fear.

Mrs. Barbauld's other contribution to children's literature was Evenings at Home, which she wrote with Dr. John Aiken, her brother. Evenings was a series of lessons, dialogues, stories, fables and poems meant to be read aloud to the entire family. It was immensely popular and was published throughout the nineteenth century.

Sarah Trimmer

Sarah Trimmer is often lumped together with Mrs. Barbauld as representing the same unrelenting moralizing. She did share with Barbauld a philosophy of education which placed religious instruction at the fore. She shared with and surpassed Hannah More's interest in the Sunday School Movement, writing many lesson books and spelling books for use at schools that educated children on Sundays and used them for labour during the week. Although she objected to the

Edgeworths' secular approach to education, she shared with them an interest in writing theories of education as well as actual books for children. Much of her writing is instruction about children and not for children. She founded and published a magazine about education called The Guardian of Education and also reviewed and published comments on children's books of the day. Although she shared some similar views about the importance of nature to the education of children, Mrs. Trimmer objected to Rousseau, claiming that "the greatest injury the youth of this nation ever received was from the introduction of Rousseau's system" (The Guardian of Education, 6 [1802]). Her objections to Rousseau were the same as her objections to the Edgeworths--a lack of religious experience.

Aside from her theories on education and work on behalf of the Sunday School Movement, Trimmer's major contribution to children's literature was her Fabulous Histories, designed for the Instruction of Children, respecting their treatment of animals, published first in 1786 and later as the History of the Robins. It is ironic that after speaking out so decisively about fairy tales (as painting children's hearts with the worst passions) that she chooses to speak to children through a family of talking robins. She is sure to indicate that in real life birds do not and cannot talk, but she nevertheless leaves herself open as a target for justified criticism about saying one thing and doing another. Whether she contradicts herself or not, a more moral flock of birds could not be found. The robin family is the parallel of the human family, and the characters of the robins pattern exactly the characteristics of the model human family. The parent robins are wise, conscientious and devoted to the correct education

of their offspring, and the children robins are obedient and grateful. Robin, Dicksy, Pecksy and Flapsy are human enough to be slightly flawed and in need of instruction, and the parents Robin are happy to oblige.

The language of the story is formal and stilted, moving away from the more casual and affectionate "mamma" in Barbauld. When presenting her mother with the gift of a spider, Pecksy addresses her as "dear parent" and claims her gratitude for being fed by her parents and her intention not to burden them with her care. While this language seems unchildlike, even in comparison with earlier children's books, it compares easily with the language which Trimmer herself used as a child. In one of her first letters, at the age of ten, Trimmer wrote to her grandparents:

> Let me, therefore, beg a continuance of your blessings and prayers, to enable me to set a right value on the privileges I enjoy by having a rational being, and to put in practice the duties I owe to God, my neighbor, and myself; and it shall be my daily prayer to the Almighty that He will make the remainder of your lives happy, and receive you at last into everlasting felicity. (Field 265/6)

However stilted the language of the story, the ultimate goal echoes the rational sentiment of both More and Barbauld. Just before Father Robin turns the robin children out from the nest, he reminds them of the principles which they have been taught: "to use industry, avoid contention, cultivate peace, and be contented with your condition." Fortunately, the children reading this are comforted by the fact that parental affection is life-long and not subject to being quenched although they are warned that "God has ordained that parental affection, when once awakened, should always remain in the human

breast, unless extinguished by the undutiful behaviour of the child" (Chapter xxiv). The second half of this chapter is devoted to Mrs. Benson "informing" her children about the principle of conduct which she prescribes for herself. This is not an opportunity for the children to ask questions, but for them to be told and expected to learn by instruction of the conduct they themselves should follow. This conduct is regarding the treatment of animals and is especially designed to follow their experience with the Robin family. The children are admonished to treat animals without cruelty but according to "the utility and necessities of every living creature."

In the final chapter to Fabulous Histories readers are informed of the rewards and/or consequences for learning universal benevolence. Harriet and Frederick, who have been properly educated by Mrs. Benson, grow up to be benevolent, kind to all people, and never cruel to animals. But the little boy who is cruel to animals grows to be a man who receives his just reward and is eventually thrown by a horse and killed.

Martha Butt Sherwood

Mary Sherwood, like Hannah More and Sarah Trimmer, was an advocate of the Sunday School Movement. Sherwood spent a great deal of her life ministering to the people of India, where she lived for an extended period with her husband. Her books were popular both in England and in India. Although she shared many ideas of children's education with both the Edgeworths and Rousseau, she passionately objected not only to the exclusion of religion in their educational

system but to their insistence upon reason. Gillian Avery describes Mrs. Sherwood's position as follows:

> In a short story called Obedience, Lucy, accustomed to instant obedience, swallows the draughts prescribed for her scarlet fever, gargles dutifully, and recovers. The wayward Robert, child of another mother, dies. 'Certain, however, it is, that when blessed some years afterwards with another little Robert [the parents'] plans of education were entirely changed; and Soloman was more frequently quoted by them at the tea-table than J.J. Rousseau, Mrs. Wollstencraft (sic), or any of their disciples.' (206)

Mrs. Sherwood's philosophy of education was based upon a belief similar to that of the Puritans: children were born evil and destined for Hell unless they rescue themselves not only with a belief in Christ, but also by their dutiful obedience to both God and their parents. In The Governess Sherwood explains in some detail her image of man. Man was created in the image of God, but was tainted through the work of Satan. This taint causes the eternal depravity of man's heart, until the Spirit of God regenerates the heart "refining and sanctifying it, till at length it would be completely restored unto the glorious image of God" (16). What Mrs. Sherwood preached, like Mrs. Trimmer, and not like the Puritans, is that there can be assurance of forgiveness and of salvation.

Of all the stories Mrs. Sherwood wrote for children, The Fairchild Family, first published in 1818 with a second part in 1842 and a final installment in 1845, was perhaps the best loved. It was the story of some of the lessons learned by the Fairchild children, Lucy, Emily and Henry. Many of the vignettes are reminiscent of Mrs. Barbauld's Lessons and Evenings at Home, and of the Edgeworths' tales. The children are taught by their parents and their education

incorporates a great deal of information about nature and about scientific principles as they are witnessed in nature. Many of the lessons concern the behaviour of the children to each other, their parents and their friends. Of all of the rational moralists, Mrs. Sherwood is perhaps best at describing the naughty child. Lucy, Emily and Henry are not priggish, pious and virtuous all the time; they occasionally lapse into very ordinary and true-to-life naughtiness when they argue with each other and when they disobey their parents. What sets Mrs. Sherwood apart, however, is her reversion to truly terrible threats and consequences to ensure obedience on behalf of her characters. In the story "Fatal Effects of Disobedience to Parents" the Fairchild children's sometime playmate, Augusta Noble, who was brought up without the fear of God, dies when she disobeys her parents and plays with fire. It is not good enough for Mrs. Sherwood to describe a child who burns her fingers; poor Augusta catches her dress on fire and the maid, "alarmed by her dreadful screams," discovers Augusta "in a blaze from head to foot. The unhappy young lady was so dreadfully burnt, that she never spoke afterwards, but died in agonies last night--a warning to all children how they presume to disobey their parents!" (84).

Although it is bad enough hearing about Augusta's gruesome death, little Henry discovers for himself the terrible consequences of disobeying his father. The consequences that Henry discovers are perhaps worse than Augusta's for they are psychological. In the tale entitled "Story of the Absence of God," Henry displays what appears to be perfectly normal child-like behaviour. He decides that learning Latin will take up too much effort and indicates to his father by

failing to learn a lesson that he does not wish to learn Latin. His father allows Henry one opportunity to change his mind, after reminding him that he expects obedience. When Henry fails to comply, this is what his father tells him:

> Henry, listen to me; when wicked men obstinately defy and oppose the power of God, He gives them up to their own bad hearts; He suffers them to live, perhaps, and partake of the light of the sun and of the fruits of the earth, but He shows them no marks of his fatherly love and favour; they have no sweet thoughts, no cheerful hours, no delightful hopes. I stand in the place of God to you, whilst you are a child; and as long as I do not ask you to do anything wrong, you must obey me; therefore, if you cast aside my authority, and will not obey my commands, I shall not treat you as I do my other children. From this time forward, Henry, I have nothing to do with you; I will speak to you no more, neither will your mamma, or sisters, or John, or Betty. Betty will be allowed to give you bread to eat, and water to drink and I shall not hinder you from going to your own bed to sleep at night; but I will have nothing more to do with you; so go out of my study immediately. (149/50)

Although Henry weeps and repents and learns his Latin there is no mercy for him until he repents of his disobedience to his father and to God. After these kinds of consequences it seems unlikely that Henry will refuse to learn his Latin lessons again. As unlikely as it appears that the Fairchild children would have to learn a lesson like this more than once, they seem, like normal children, to always be getting themselves into trouble. Their father has some equally gruesome punishment appropriate for each of their misdeeds. Perhaps the most famous of these punishments is for quarreling with each other, and in the heat of the moment expressing a lack of love for each other. For this sin their father takes Lucy, Emily and Henry to see the remains of a body hanging from a gibbet. The man was hanged

in his own garden for murdering his brother, whom he had as a child been in the habit of quarreling with; when the children protest that they have heard and seen enough, and that they will never again do anything but love each other, their father insists on telling them the entire story, warning them of the dire consequences of their behaviour.

Sunday School Moralists instructed children in Godly behaviour every bit as much as the Puritans. Their writing was less sectarian and addressed a wider audience, although each of these writers had a strict affiliation with one church body. More, Barbauld, Trimmer and Sherwood taught children to be moral because morality pleased God. They taught obedience because they believed that Hell had wider gates than Heaven. Child characters were docile; they were objects for instruction and receptacles for knowledge instead of active participants in learning experiences. Amusement was provided for the child reader because it was expedient to do so, not because of a wish to delight readers. Underlying any lighter moments in the tales is the threat of parental or Divine retribution. Maria Edgeworth introduced a system of rewards and punishments for her characters. Although she advocated experimentation and learning through reasoned explanation, she believed that bad behaviour had consequences which must be paid. For Edgeworth, however, morality was practical and not religious. Children should be good not to please God but because they owed it to their parents, and ultimately because humanity and fairness demanded it. Although the religious moralists formed characters who were naughty as well as saintly, their portraits tend to be lifeless

and stilted. This may result from the fact that tutors were paragons of virtue the children learned from, and children were often silent. Edgeworth's characters are livelier and more diverse. Children themselves were the subjects of the stories rather than their tutors, and they learn more often through their own experiences than through the words of others. In many of her stories, in fact, the adults are distinctly removed, and cannot help the child in determining moral behaviour. It is only after the child has made his own choices that the adults appear, to hand out rewards or punishments as the situation demands. Edgeworth is criticized as ruining her children's literature with didactic moralizing. While her moral intent was ever present, if she is compared with her predecessors and her contemporaries she is ahead in the comparison. While each of the writers before her offered some small changes in the style of writing for children, it was Edgeworth who introduced the most lasting changes--changes which were able to free this literature to become the type which modern readers recognize. She valued children as delightful, rational and good. She wished to please them when she wrote literature for them, and she did not, apparently, believe that they were all destined to Hell if she did not do something to change the situation. She replaced religion and doctrine with justice, truth and humanity.

IV. Justice, Truth and Humanity: Edgeworth's Practical Morality

The Parent's Assistant and Early Lessons

Maria Edgeworth wrote The Parent's Assistant and Early Lessons in 1796 and 1801 in order to put the principles of Practical Education into practice, in stories which were able to demonstrate their effectiveness to parents. The two sets of stories were the best of the ones that Maria told her brothers and sisters. They had the distinct advantage of having already been approved by a juvenile audience when they were published. Critical opinion has alternately praised and ridiculed these stories for children. Her characters are accused of being cardboard figures and her plots are likewise lambasted as formulaic and dull. Most of the criticism appears to consider Rosamond and "The Purple Jar" as representative of the best of Edgeworth's children's literature. Discussion of this one story is often generalized to represent adequate discussion of all of her work. While it would be futile to argue that her work is not, in some ways, formulaic, her literature for children has significantly more depth of characterization and plot than she is generally credited with. Most of the criticism regarding Edgeworth's work seems preoccupied with her moral intentions--her clear didactic purpose. It seems that Maria Edgeworth is truly artistic in writing only when she is not preaching at her audiences or forgets her moral design. One critic suggests that the only characters of interest that Edgeworth created were the ones not involved in the moral design of a story, the "midway" characters (Elton 187). Twila Yates sums up this criticism in the following way:

> Her entire technique rushes the reader toward a single preconceived conclusion. Thus her contrast of black and white characters precludes the introduction of the reality of moral ambiguity. The careful delineation of a clear cut cause for each effect leaves the reader no room for analysis or introspection . . . while the absolute meting out of rewards and punishments denies the reader even the small comfort of recognizing the superior moral for himself. (67)

There is no doubt that all of these generalizations about character and plot have some roots in reality, but what comments such as this suggest is a current inability to look beyond moral prejudice. In order to study the writing of Maria Edgeworth with any justice it would appear, to me, that she must be studied within her social framework. It is equally obvious to me that we must stop trying to study her artistry as it would have been had she not been so singularly moralistic and didactic. Maria Edgeworth's moral design is irrefutable and to try to eliminate it from her stories is impossible, if not ridiculous. Her reason for writing was to instill the principles of justice, truth and humanity into children. Without these principles man's nature is corrupted by vice, and society declines instead of improves. While Maria differed from many of her contemporaries in that she did not combine her moralizing with religion, she shared with them a crusading wish to improve mankind through education. The very lack of religious terror renders Maria's children's stories more lighthearted, but there can be no mistaking her deadly seriousness about her task, and about the principles of education which she held dear. That she was able to combine these principles with playfulness, and demonstrate them through believable children in complex situations is her contribution to the growing art

of instruction through delight. To ridicule her moral design is to judge her art by a modern standard which has forgotten its roots in the catechetical religious tradition of the Puritans.

Edgeworth's purpose in writing is perfectly clear in each one of her stories. It is not unusual for that purpose to be stated in the first pages of the story, providing the centre out of which the entire story evolves. Often that moral is stated by the children in the stories, sometimes by the parents or teachers, and at other times by authorial intrusion. The morals are not subtle or difficult to find; nothing could be more obvious than "Waste Not Want Not" or "Forgive and Forget." The morals of these two stories are the maxims which they are named after. There is in fact little creativity in any of the titles of the stories, but these titles reflect the simplicity of the tales for children. Her work, like her titles, is clear, concise and to the point. There are no confusing allusions, no great hidden messages--the truth is always within the grasp of the child reader. Her directness is an attribute in ensuring her audience's response. To suggest otherwise is perhaps to appraise her children's literature by adult reading standards. Edgeworth herself debated how she could incorporate her moral principles into her children's literature without destroying the entertainment value of her stories. She was not averse to criticism in this regard and once called Belinda, the eponymous hero of one of her novels, a stick and stone figure when compared to the genius of another character she was reading about. In a letter to Mrs. Ruxton she wrote:

> If only one instance were taken, the whole story must turn upon that, and be constructed to bear on one point; and that pointing to the moral would

> not appear natural. As Sir Walter Scott said to me in reply to my observing, ' it is difficult to introduce the moral without displeasing the reader,' 'the rats won't go into the trap if they smell the hand of the ratcatcher.' (19 December 1825)

In the end, although Maria did her best not to displease her readers, she was more concerned that the reader 'got' the moral.

One of the criticisms aimed at Edgeworth is that her propensity is to produce black and white figures, with no depth of character. "Lazy Lawrence" is one of the stories sometimes cited to substantiate this criticism. "Lazy Lawrence" certainly has its good and bad little boys, but it is also an appropriate example of Edgeworth's ability to create interesting contrasting characters who demonstrate the moral reality of cause and effect and reward and punishment. The story is one in which the parent or guardian is too ill to provide sufficient guidance, and the child is left to survive, following the principles of education which he has been taught as an infant. This is quite a common theme for Edgeworth, used in "The Orphans," "The False Key" and "The Basket-Woman." Jem, the sick widow's son, sets about to raise enough money to pay the rent and save his horse Lightfoot. Being a "good industrious lad" (7), he realizes that crying will do him no good. He is filled with perhaps unrealistic optimism, hoping that "If I get ever so little it will be something; and who knows but landlord might then wait a bit longer?" (7). Through his perseverance, good nature, honesty and industry Jem is able to earn enough money to reach his goal. Lazy Lawrence is the antithesis of Jem; he is idle and eventually is persuaded to crime because of his laziness. Lawrence's indolence is blamed directly on his drunken father, the ale-house

keeper. Jem, while he is industrious and steadfast in his goal, is a natural little boy and "as fond of play as any little boy could be" (23). Jem makes the mistake, while encouraging Lawrence to play with him, of revealing the fact that he has some money, this in reply to Lawrence's idea that Jem envies his wealth. Jem's trustworthy nature leads him to reveal his hiding place to Lawrence, who in turn reveals it to a robber.

Edgeworth's characters are believable, and for a child reader interesting. The stable-boy is the only truly black character, and he is in reality only a prop for the story rather than a truly developed, flesh and blood character. Lazy Lawrence is a believable little boy, who is good natured and inclined to coax money from his father so that he can eat fruit, nuts and sweetmeats. Lawrence is living proof to Edgeworth's readers of the great chain of actions based on cause and effect. Lawrence begins by being a lazy boy, but through that one flaw he learns to be wicked. Lawrence's bad education leads first to idleness, then to bad company, and finally to wickedness. But Lawrence is one of the characters in Edgeworth's view who benefits from punishment, for one month in the prison at Bridewell turns him into a model citizen who is industrious day and night. Edgeworth's blind trust and naivety about the prison system appears unrealistic but does reflect accurately her personal experience. In a letter to Mrs. Edgeworth, Maria described her visit to Newgate Women's Prison. While she uses words like "dreary" and "dull" to describe the setting, the women, though subdued and almost lifeless, were clean and apparently converted by prayer and Scripture readings. She reflects an eternal, almost unbelievable optimism in her comments:

> The spirit of good is often smothered but never wholly extinguished. . . .
>
> The actual good done by employing these people and keeping them tolerably happy during this period of imprisonment is great and there is hope that many when they are set at liberty will continue their orderly and industrious habits. (16 March 1822)

Of all of the convicts (accused of anything from theft to murder) they only meet one truly bad, irredeemable old woman: "she is so depraved and so odiously dirty that she cannot be purified body or mind."

Jem is a truly virtuous little boy, but he is not lacking interest. His attachment to Lightfoot, his heartfelt emotion and his good intentions produce sympathy in the reader. If Jem were simply a pious, priggish stick figure it is doubtful that the reader would care whether he was able to achieve his goal. But the cheering section is on Jem's side when his money is stolen and the reader wants to witness his reward (a kiss) for giving his mammy the rent money. Jem, although virtuous, is the victim of the vice of others. Even his benefactor, the lady, requires almost miraculous proof before she believes that he is honest. But virtue does prevail and Jem's reward for being honest and industrious is having his goal realized. The sequence of events by which Jem is able to attain success represents one area in which Edgeworth has been justly criticized. After speaking out against fairy tales, she provides a fairy tale quality to many of her happy endings. The lady, for Jem, assumes fairy godmother proportions, and the events which lead the farmer and the lady to the money verges on miraculous. It hinges on the timely arrival of the milk-woman who has given a silver penny to Jem and told him never to part with it. The thieves conveniently drop this coin on their route

to escape, and the milk-woman who just happens to witness this marches over to Jem's house in order to cuff him for his dishonesty, at the very time that the lady requires proof of Jem's innocence. There is little reality in this impossibly coincidental sequence of events, but they are nevertheless appealing events, and provoke in the child's imagination the delightful sense of optimism which Jem starts out with. This fairy tale quality resolves many of the complicated situations which Edgeworth's heroes and heroines find themselves in: the thrifty saving of a string proves the maxim Waste Not Want Not; the Basketwoman, with some timely eavesdropping, saves the day for Paul and Anne, and a notched piece of wood proves the villainy of Piedro in "Little Merchants." As Anne Thackeray suggests, philanthropic manufacturers, liberal noblemen, or benevolent ladies always appear in the nick of time.

The moral of the story is obvious: good parents should educate their children to believe that idleness is the root of all evil and that industry and honesty are always rewarded with good. Lazy Lawrence has his just reward by being put into prison, and Jem his by finding the stolen money. Jem's reward is appropriate for his behaviour, and Lawrence's punishment is just for his actions. As is often the case, Edgeworth rarely leaves the entire story to be told by her children. She interrupts the narrative to explain why she includes in the story the portrayal of great vice:

> Here let us pause in our story--we are almost afraid to go on--the rest is very shocking--our little readers will shudder as they read. But it is better that they should know the truth, and see what the idle boy came to at last. (51)

Here are the principles of Practical Education demonstrated in reality.

The contrasting characters portrayed so well in Lazy Lawrence are also in evidence in many of the other stories. Francisco and Piedro in "Little Merchants" reveal a similar contrast, although Piedro is a truly wicked, irredeemable character in the end. Their story is about honesty and again the root of the wickedness of Piedro's lying is the ill education he has received from his father. For Piedro, as for Lawrence, what ill education had begun, bad company finished, and for Francisco as for Jem "a good beginning makes a good ending" (234). Tarleton, Loveit and Hardy provide the same character contrast in "Tarleton," although Tarleton is a truly bad character. Loveit is the object of the story here, for he is pulled between the wicked ways of Tarleton and the goodness of Hardy. His conscience finally wins him over, and he learns a lesson he will never forget. These same rich character contrasts exist in "The False Key," "The Bracelets," and "The Barring Out."

In a summary statement regarding all of Maria Edgeworth's literature, Elizabeth Harden criticized Maria's plots as the weakest part of her already bad writing:

> The plots are weighted with extraneous details such as unnecessary digression, moral commentaries, elementary explanations, and prosy preaching which thwart the flow of the narratives. . . . Her themes are often trivial and childish. More importantly, they are self-evident and are not in themselves sufficiently complex to hold a reader's interest for very long. They fail to supply motivation to the plot development, they do not leave the characters with anything of importance to do, and they are not adequate

> sources for mystery and suspense, necessary requisites to any successful plot organization. (Maria Edgeworth's Art of Prose Fiction 232)

The plot outline of Lazy Lawrence is adequate to refute this argument. Edgeworth's plots are no simple matter; they are complicated enough to delight any child. Her themes may be childish, but then, that was their intent: they were, after all, written for children. "Simple Susan" provides an appropriate means by which to analyze Edgeworth's plot structure. It is one of the longest of the tales, requiring quite an attention span on behalf of her young readers. Most of her longer stories were sequential in nature, with little necessary transition from one to the other. "Simple Susan" is complex and builds, for the child, a keen continuing interest in the plot development through the use of suspense and character emotion. Simple Susan is a "sweet tempered, modest, sprightly, industrious" girl who was the "pride of her village" (48). She is virtuous and rescues her family from impending disaster through her honesty. It is interesting that for Susan, as was true for Jem in "Lazy Lawrence," her success comes about because of her own initiative: she makes bread when her mother is unable, impressing the Somers who turn out to be, along with the old harper, her fairy god-parents. Susan is virtuous, but I believe that she is well loved by the reader, as well as by the village children. She loves her parents, is kind to the other children, and withstands Miss Barbara's wickedness with silence. She is further endeared to readers when she refuses to say "Amen" to Mrs. Price's prayers for Attorney Case--"May the blessings of Heaven be with Him" (117). The Cases--note the allegorical significance--are

truly wicked people who earn their just rewards. Miss Barbara, whose education has been neglected (47), is the daughter of an attorney who, building himself from nothing, is the middleman between the gentry and the peasants. Barbara, like her father, has delusions of grandeur and is separated from the poor village children in order to make her genteel. Not helped by her gossiping maid Betty, Miss Barbara reads dirty novels and contrives to cheat Simple Susan of her guinea-hen. In the end she loses her dearest wish, to attend the harper's ball, because of her greed and a multitude of bee stings. Her mock generosity in giving the stolen guinea-hen to the Somers ruins her, and along with her brother and father she is exiled from the village. She remains unrepentant and the reader applauds, in somewhat sadistic glee, when she is punished for her wickedness by the bee stings. Attorney Case is equally wicked, cheating Farmer Price of his substitute money and attempting to have his lease forfeited. Case's real wickedness though, comes when he bargains with Susan for her pet lamb Daisy, allowing her father a week's continuance so that Attorney Case can make a gift of lamb to the Somers. Although the attorney has no pity for the children who weep for Daisy, the butcher, whose son has been befriended by Susan, is unable to kill the lamb. Case is discovered by the old harper at the harper's ball and receives his own form of justice; he is evicted from his land because of a flaw in his lease.

This series of events leads to a fair amount of simple suspense, adequate to interest the child reader. Susan's mother is ill; her father, being honest, admits that he is ten days short of the exempt age for a Militia-man, and must instead find eight or nine guineas for

a substitute or be enlisted himself. Susan has optimism and industry enough to play the odds and attempt to change what seems to be a certain future, but her pennies are not collecting fast enough. The cunning of the Cases robs Susan of both her cherished pets, the guinea hen and the lamb, and both seem certain to die to provide a tasty meal for the Somers. Both of her pets, by almost fairy-like intervention, are restored to Susan in a scene about which Sir Walter Scott said, "When the boy brings back the lamb to the little girl, there is nothing for it but to put down the book and cry" (Fields 271). Even though Susan's pets are restored to her, there is still the threat of her father's fate, until in the end the old harper repays the kindness of the Prices by lending or giving them the money necessary to pay for the substitute. Farmer Price is given the new job of collecting the rents, Arthur Somers being willing to assume his proper function as a landlord; Mrs. Price recovers because of joy, and Simple Susan is to have a new dress. Edgeworth concluded with this ultimate affirmation: "You see, at last, Attorney Case, with all his cunning, has not proved a match for Simple Susan" (222). Honesty, industry and affection triumph over cunning and avarice.

Rosamond is the best known of Edgeworth's children. Early Lessons tells of Rosamond's experiences through a number of short stories which Edgeworth continued in an 1821 volume. Rosamond and her mother are most famous for their actions in the story "The Purple Jar." In this story Rosamond, who is seven years old, is faced with a logical rational choice but blunders because of her impetuosity. As Rosamond and her mother are walking in the town Rosamond sees all sorts of attractive things in the shop windows--ribbons, buckles,

lace. When she asks her mother if she is going to buy them, her mother, ever logical, asks Rosamond why she would buy them. Rosamond suggests that she buy these pretty things and then determine a use for them; her mother suggests that she would rather determine their use first. After seeing the purple jar in the chemist's shop and determining that it would make a lovely vase, Rosamond, who has a large hole in the sole of her shoe, is offered this choice by her mother: she will buy Rosamond the purple jar, or she will buy her a new pair of shoes. Her mother offers her two pieces of advice before she completes her choice: the first is that should she choose the jar Rosamond will not receive new shoes for the next month; the second is that Rosamond should be sure to check that the jar will be all that she expects it to be. Rosamond, reasoning a little rashly, decides that the shoes will last her another month because the month will go by quickly. When she attempts to check this reason with her mother, Mamma's reply is "Nay, my dear, I want you to think for yourself; you will have time enough to consider the matter, whilst I speak to Mr. Sole" (4). Disregarding her mother's sound piece of advice, Rosamond announces her choice to her mother, but she qualifies it in the following way, "I should like to have the flower-pot; that is, if you won't think me very silly, mamma." To which her mother responds "Why, as to that, I can't promise you, Rosamond; but, when you have to judge for yourself, you should choose what will make you happy, and then it would not signify who thought you silly" (4). When they return home Rosamond discovers that she has indeed been very silly, for when she empties the purple jar, in order to make use of it for a vase, the jar is no longer purple. Although she offers to return the jar "purple

stuff and all" (5) in order to obtain the necessary shoes, her mother denies her that option and for one month Rosamond must suffer many difficulties and distresses (6) because of her imprudent choice. The final humiliation comes when, on the last day of the month, Rosamond's father refuses to take her to the glasshouse with him because "no one must walk slip-shod with me" (6).

Many of the other Rosamond stories reveal Rosamond making choices, being forced to think for herself, and having to pay the rewards and punishments of her own thinking. Rosamond has been called the best of Edgeworth's children and there is no doubt that she captured the lifelike impetuosity and eagerness of a real child. Rosamond is attracted to pretty things and allows her emotions to overrule her reason on many occasions. In a later story, "The Birthday Present," she makes what turns out to be a disdained and quite useless filigree basket for her cousin Bell, whom she does not truly like but considers silly. Her reason for presenting the basket is because Bell will expect a gift and, the reader guesses, because Rosamond would like to jolt her own family into the practice of celebrating birthdays. Rosamond is a truly rounded, genuine child. She is not so full of virtue, for she would rather be thought well of for presenting Bell with a present than demonstrate true generosity like her sister Laura, who gives her money to the needy little girl outside the ribbon shop. Likewise, she is not a wicked child, for she is quick to repent of her flaws and tries her best to make the correct choices. Perhaps the best description of Rosamond's character is given in the story "The Rabbit": "Rosamond wearied herself with perpetual endeavors to please everybody" (45). Like a child, Rosamond

talks incessantly and changes her mind every few minutes. She also has a real child's habit of making excuses. Many of these bad habits are cured in the stories. Rosamond learns from her errors, but she continues to struggle between reason and emotion, and this struggle causes her to make ever new wrong choices. Perhaps Edgeworth's success in presenting Rosamond naturally can be attributed to Rosamond's model--in her letters Edgeworth refers to herself as Rosamond at sixty.

Rosamond's mother has assumed monstrous proportions in critical opinion. The woman, who is calm and logical in the story, because she is also a little cold has been described in the following ways:

> You hate the mother: she ought to have glass eyes and a wooden tail . . . You know she is right, and you loathe rectitude accordingly (Darton 142).
>
> Breathes there a child with soul so dead, that would not to itself have said - 'I hate, I simply detest that mother of Rosamond' (Lawless 56).
>
> . . . the behaviour of Rosamond's mother about the purple jar (is) rather too bad. It was really a mean advantage to take of a child. Another grown person would have check-mated mamma . . . (Field 270).

While by modern standards Rosamond's mother is certainly not Mother of the Year, judged within her own social framework she is not the ogre we might at first see. The mother is a walking, living example of what a tutor should be in Practical Education, and she is not without her similarities to the tutor in Emile. She possesses a relentless logic, and she is firm about insisting that Rosamond, and Rosamond only, should deal with the consequences of her own unreasonable thinking. As in most contemporary writing, affection is a reward given for good behaviour. Unconditional love is not the norm of the

day. Severity was the order of the day and at least in Edgeworth's tales only the wicked children are exiled. The kind of severity popular in Sherwood, where Henry, when he fails to learn his Latin lesson, is disowned by his whole family, is not to be found in Edgeworth. It is interesting to note a child's response to Rosamond's mother. Newby relates the following incident:

> 'Tell Miss Edgeworth I do really think that Rosamond was foolish not to choose the shoes, but her Mama made her go without them very long. I would not have made her go barefoot more than a week, said one little boy aged four to his mother.' (Newby 37)

Surprisingly, Rosamond's mother receives all of the criticism in this story. Her father is equally as priggish in refusing to take Rosamond with him because her shoes are not neat enough. Rosamond, in all the stories, constantly fears her father's displeasure, while her rewards are often linked to being able to please him or spend time with him. Her father appears to have the memory of an elephant. Two years after the purple jar incident, in "The Birthday Present," her father tells her that the basket in which she has invested so much time and money is as useful as the purple jar. This is not the first reminder that Rosamond is given either. Whenever she is forced to make a choice, she is reminded of her foolishness with the purple jar. The jar, rather than being a simple reminder, becomes in some ways her nemesis.

Edgeworth, in Rosamond and other stories such as "The Little Dog Trusty," reveals family dynamics which are true to life for many families. In Rosamond Laura is the younger child's persistent agony, the perfect older sister. Her brother is not so perfect and displays

very real nasty older brother tendencies such as laughing at and teasing Rosamond. The children are not carbon copies of one another. In "The Little Dog Trusty", Frank and Robert are brothers, but they are individuals with differing philosophies of life. It appears odd that two little boys who grow up with the same education should be so different; Frank is brave and confesses his flaws and takes his punishment, while Robert is a coward and lies to escape punishment. In both of these examples Edgeworth demonstrated a perhaps unconscious ability to represent reality in her education. She recognizes the individual nature of the child, and suggests, ever so vaguely, that nature may be stronger than the educational theory imposed on the child. While education and punishment will stop both Rosamond and Robert from becoming wicked children, they demonstrate the individual complexities which make them different from their siblings, and not as easily educated in the ways of virtue.

Edgeworth revealed similar family dynamics in her stories "Frank" and "Harry and Lucy." Like Rosamond, these stories survived into sequels published in 1822 and 1825 respectively. These stories more than any of the others show a 'normal' family education, with all the experimentation and scientific facts appended to such an education. In many of the other stories mentioned, except Rosamond, the children are the primary characters, and their parents, if they exist at all, play nominal roles in the outcome of the story. The parents have done their duty, or not done it, by educating their children, and the children are left to fend for themselves and put into practice the truths of honesty, industry and humanity. In these two tales, as with Rosamond, the parents are primary characters, active educators and the

means by which the children receive their rewards or punishments. In these stories the parents are generally upper class and have the time and money necessary to educate their children according to stern standards. The other stories, where the parents or guardians are too poor to educate their children at home, require outside, fairy-like intervention for their successful conclusion. Because of this theme, "Frank" and "Harry and Lucy" are less adventurous and more regulated than the other stories. In many ways they are more for parents than they are for children, because they demonstrate how parents can put into practice school-like factual information suggested in Practical Education. The parents do continue to teach the more nebulous virtues of justice and humanity, but these are supplemented with factual experimentation. These scientific and practical experiments earned the criticism of Walter Scott who suggested that wood would be better left to carpenters than wasted on children.

Frank and his mamma are the most Barbauld-like characters in Edgeworth. They learn many lessons by walking outside and discussing nature. Many of the lessons that Frank learns relate directly to the principles taught in Practical Education. Frank disappoints his father greatly by learning the silly trick of playing with his buttons when he recites his memory work. While his father is happy to note that Frank understands what he has memorized, he suggests that Frank not come to see him again to recite until he has rid himself of his trick. After some thought Frank is able to find a reasonable solution to his problem. In "Frank" we also witness the conditional love of the parent. When Frank is disturbing his mother while she writes on the table, she suggests to him that he must learn to consider the

wishes of others before his own will be considered. She tells Frank "I am glad to have you with me when you are not troublesome" (214). When he is troublesome, Frank's mother does not hesitate to tell him that she wishes to be left alone. Frank is never banished from his family though, like Henry in the Fairchilds. Even when he is naughty with his cousin, his punishment is separation from her for a day, not banishment until he repents. Edgeworth then, while her parents demand the same strict obedience, unreasoning and blind, that was demanded in stories by her contemporaries, "avoids miserable beatings and morbid deathbed repentances" (Harden Maria Edgeworth 33).

The 1822 sequel to "Frank" presents an interesting comparison to Sherwood. When Henry challenges his father's authority by refusing to learn his Latin he is banished, not from home but from social interaction with his family. Frank encounters a similar situation when he is lazy in learning his Latin. His father reasons with him at first but after repeated failures, Frank has his "day of disgrace" (77) and is threatened with being sent away from his family to school. The fear of such a fate gives Frank the necessary impetus to learn his Latin and he is granted a small reprieve. The difference between the two stories is in the behaviour of the parents. Mr. Fairchild, claiming he is God to Henry, is cold and unmoving. Frank's father is displeased but his son's disobedience has not led him to remove his affection. His insistence that Frank learn Latin is not based on a need to be obeyed; rather it is based on Frank's own welfare: if he does not know his Latin when he goes to school, he will be flogged.

"Harry and Lucy" was begun by Richard Lovell Edgeworth and Maria gives her father credit for many of the ideas in the story. This is

perhaps not surprising as "Harry and Lucy" contains the most experiments and scientific facts. Harry and Lucy are upper class little children, who are generally educated separately--Harry by his father and Lucy by her mother. Lucy is not denied access to scientific information though, and her father insists, as with Harry, that she understand and be able to explain and answer questions about the information he gives her. As with Frank, Harry and Lucy's father also guards against allowing them to become bored with their education. Their experiments are always cut short while the children are still enthusiastic and eager to learn. Harry and Lucy go to church and read Mrs. Barbauld's Hymns in Prose, a reference to religious education that her other stories are lacking; this may explain the children's goodness. In the long run, while Harry and Lucy are eager and sometimes naughty, they are a little bit stiffer than Edgeworth's other children because they are always guided or supervised by their parents. Their poorer counterparts, although they have to fend for themselves and have not the luxury of school-learning, do have a freedom that leads to more practical experiments in reality. They would appear to have more fun.

Moral and Popular Tales

Moral Tales and Popular Tales were published in 1801 and 1804 as a continuation in the cycle which Mrs. Barbauld had started. Mrs. Barbauld in Lessons for Children begins the child's education at the age of two or three. Edgeworth had continued that education with The Parent's Assistant and Early Lessons. The moral and popular tales were designed to conclude the education of the adolescent. As such,

the tales are very similar to the type of stories told in the earlier two volumes. The characters are a bit older, with adolescents speaking to readers of the same age or adults teaching lessons to adolescents because of remembered errors. The plots are a little more complicated and the lessons include more moral ambiguities and less direct notions of right and wrong. They are nevertheless intended to teach a moral, and the moral of the story is sufficiently explained in the end to require no further comment. Angelina and Forester are the most famous of the characters from these tales. Both characters exhibit a flaw which sends them on a quest of sorts. Forester is a brave and generous young man who has no appreciation for polite society. Although flawed at the beginning, Forester learns finally to live in polite society when he discovers that no form or level of society is perfect. His delusions about being poor are shattered as are his notions about middle class society. His romantic notions of society are disproved through an incredibly complex set of events, fairy-like once again, and Forester is restored to his rightful position in society. It is only in this rightful position that Forester learns how to be truly generous and honest. Archibald MacKenzie, Forester's antithesis, is much too taken with the pretensions of society and becomes almost criminal in his cowardice and avarice. In the end his world is set straight but not by the wise and humane teacher figure, as in previous stories. Forester's new wisdom is based upon his own experience and reason alone. Only after he has worked out his situation for himself is Forester able to appreciate the wise and virtuous models of Dr. Campbell and his son Henry.

Angelina Warwick, like Forester, is not content in the society in which she lived. "She felt insupportable ennui from the want of books and conversation suited to her taste, . . . observed with disgust, the meanness of her companion . . . and felt with triumph the superiority of her own abilities" (9). Angelina's quest is to find Araminta, a novelist whom she admired and had corresponded with. After a series of adventures, instead of finding the humble, tranquil cottage (12) which she has imagined, Angelina discovers the true Araminta: "her voice is so loud, and her looks so vulgar, and there is such a smell of brandy!--How unlike the elegant delicacy I had expected in my unknown friend!" (67). The story concludes with the following moral lesson:

> As for our heroine, under the friendly and judicious care of lady Frances Somerset, she acquired that which is more useful to the possessor than genius--good sense. Instead of rambling over the world in search of an unknown friend, she attached herself to those of whose worth she received proofs more convincing than a letter of three folio sheets, stuffed with sentimental nonsense. In short, we have now, in the name of Angelina Warwick, the pleasure to assure all those whom it may concern, that it is possible for a young lady of sixteen to cure herself of the affectation of sensibility and the folly of romance. (92)

As Marilyn Butler suggests, Angelina's true quest is not for Araminta but for "a sanity of judgment based on her own realism" (134). Moral and Popular Tales provide education in the form of fiction for the adolescent audience. In so doing, they provided some of the first literature of its kind to that particular age group. While Edgeworth's contemporaries had participated in the movement to recognize childhood as a distinct period in life, the upper ranges of

childhood were still a mystery for many. Edgeworth attempts to solve the mystery by classifying adolescence as an older period of childhood instead of the lower range of adulthood. She provides these older children with a unique identity and with a range of practical examples to place them within her theory of education.

Up to this point Edgeworth can be seen as having perfected the use of the moral tale. She presented the ideals of an educational theory within a framework of stories which children could understand and enjoy. Her characters, themes and plots are ones which the child reader can appreciate for their true-to-life integrity. More than anything her lack of doctrine and sectarian preaching took the moral tale out of the domain of religion in which her predecessors and her contemporaries had confined it.

Edgeworth's sense of fun is evident in many of the stories. In "Waste Not Want Not," Hal is absorbed by notions of high society that Lady Diana Sweepstakes has put into his head. After visiting with her, Hal begins to use the word "famous" to describe everything that he thinks is good. Little Patty, his cousin, after listening to him for some time finally observes:

> But I don't understand, cousin Hal, why you call this bow a famous bow: you say famous very often; and I don't know exactly what it means - a famous uniform - famous doings--I remember you said there are to be famous doings, the first of September upon the Downs - What does famous mean?

To this Hal replies:

> O, why famous means - Now don't you know what famous means? -- It means --- It is a word that people say --- It is the fashion to say it --- It means - it means famous. (177)

When Patty laughs at him and tells him that does not explain it, Hal says that if she can't understand it is not his fault, and everybody knows but little children. In the end he finally describes "famous" as "grand" or "fine." The reader chuckles along with Patty at this truly recognizable habit of pretentious people of using words which they do not understand. Hal's fumbling to find an adequate explanation is a moment of embarrassment which most readers also probably share. The humour in this scene is directed against one of the characters, and shared by the characters in the story. A different type of humour is used in "Mademoiselle Panache." Towards the end of the story, to further prove the ridiculousness of the governess and her inappropriateness to teach the Lady Augusta, Edgeworth describes the following scene. Mademoiselle Panache, seeing a spider on her student's sash "shrieked" and pointed. Emma attempts to calm them by saying that it is only a spider, but Lady Augusta, impassioned by the cries of her governess, shakes herself until the spider falls to the ground. Mademoiselle attempts to kill the frightened spider as he "was making his way as fast as possible from the field of battle" (172). Emma and Helen, "whose humanity was still proof against Mademoiselle Panache," attempt to rescue the spider and put him out the window. "Just as they had got the poor spider out of the reach of its enemies, a sudden gust of wind blew it back again; it fell once more upon the floor" (Vol.IV 173). Mademoiselle yells "kill it" and crushes the spider to death. Both governess and student are satisfied with the results of the incident, while Emma and Helen are slow to forget. The author comments about the entire scene: "So much for a lesson on humanity" (173). In this scene the author and the

audience are the only ones laughing. The reader laughs because the author has described something very familiar and mundane as a great battle, further pointing out the ridiculousness of the governess's response. The author invites readers to laugh at two of the characters in the scene, but she also invites a type of self-mockery by pointing out the ineffectiveness of both the author and the characters to achieve the teaching of a lesson in humanity.

Perhaps Edgeworth's finest contribution to the pursuit of enjoyment and entertainment in children's literature is the introduction of humour. The Puritans were so absorbed in saving souls that they did not allow for play, let alone for humour. The Sunday School Moralists were conscious of the need to attract and maintain the attention of their audiences through entertainment as well as instruction, but they entertained through plot development and character rather than through the devices of laughter. The chapbooks had introduced a form of literature that appealed to the imagination of the audience perhaps more keenly than anything prior to it, but there was little humour there aimed directly at a child audience. Of all the writers before Maria Edgeworth, Anna Laetitia Barbauld came closest to humour. While her writing is intensely religious and highly moral in content, there is a lightheartedness about Lessons for Children that is playful, if not humorous. Barbauld recognizes in the child the capacity for silliness and nonsense that is not morally destructive as so many of the comments about fairy tales by her contemporaries would suggest. Charles, in the first part of Lessons is mischievous and comic, and the mother pampers this sense of play with such comments:

> I have hit my head against the table, naughty table!
> No, not naughty table, silly boy!
> The table did not run against Charles. Charles ran against the table.
> The table stood still in its place. (19)
>
> Charles' wooden horse is broke.
> Charles has fallen down and broke his head.
> Shall I take it to the carpenter's?
> No, silly boy, carpenters do not mend heads. (52)

While this is not humour, there is here an acceptance of the comic nature of the child and acceptance also of a child's love of silliness.

Maria Edgeworth was the first to capitalize on this love to capture the attention of her audience. While comic scenes like the ones above are not uncommon in Edgeworth's stories, her real achievement in humour is demonstrated in Little Plays for Children.

Little Plays for Children

Maria Edgeworth wrote Little Plays for Children between 1808 and 1827 when they were published. The three plays are probably the most neglected and obscure of Edgeworth's work. They are rarely mentioned in critical studies of her work and sometimes fail to show up in primary bibliographical listings. Marilyn Butler makes two passing references to Little Plays for Children. In the first she suggests that while Edgeworth never mastered the art of dramatic writing she nevertheless continued to write plays for her family's entertainment. The second reference is in an Appendix in regard to her publisher. Other writers seem unaware of these plays, suggesting perhaps that they are seldom read, even as part of a critical study of Edgeworth's work. Difficulty in obtaining the book may explain some of this

neglect, but a critical study of Edgeworth's children's writing cannot be complete without them. How they have managed to remain obscure for so long appears impossible to explain, for in my opinion Little Plays represents some of the best of Edgeworth's writing for children. To ignore them with generalizations about her other stories robs Edgeworth of the real significance of her contribution to children's literature.

The preface to the plays makes clear from the start that Little Plays is taking a different approach to literature than most other children's books. It identifies its comic intent as well as its entertainment value. The preface also makes clear Maria's intent to treat her child readers as capable of making their own judgments regarding both the style and the content of the plays. While Edgeworth wishes to add the words "Warranted Harmless" to the title, she recognizes that "it is for young readers to determine whether these little plays are amusing or not. They--and they only--can pronounce the sentence which the author most wishes to add, "WARRANTED ENTERTAINING" (295). The preface is a dramatic enactment between a mother, brother and sister who are deciding whether or not they will buy the book. The mother is most concerned that the book is harmless, while the children are most concerned about its entertainment value. Judging from the children's literature that was available it is not difficult to imagine a discussion like this taking place at the booksellers. The conversation pokes fun at prefaces, and at the pretensions of authors who write praises about their own work in prefaces. Prefaces in general are "stupid", and "there's no believing them. Besides, they are always so long" (293). In response to the

preface promising that the audience has never fallen asleep, the little boy doubts the integrity of the author's promise, and assures his sister that the author has probably not seen the ones who slept, for by his own experience "I know I have gone to sleep when people were reading very grand things" (294). The skeptical little boy continues to doubt the worthiness of the book until the preface tells him that the plays made people laugh. After this discovery he determines that the book just might be worth reading, but that he will judge for himself. Aside from making a certain comic intent clear, the preface also demonstrates through the interaction between the family a subtle shift in the way family dynamics operate. While the mother is busy determining whether the plays are harmless, the children are not sitting passively awaiting the verdict. They are active in deciding what they will read, and the mother agrees with the little boy that the final judgment about the book belongs to the boy himself. Other characters in Edgeworth's stories, although only the upper class ones were concerned with books, do not have this freedom of choice. In "Frank" and "Harry and Lucy" the mother decides what the children will read. At one point she tells the children that there is nothing else appropriate for them to read in the book they have been using. The children do not question her judgment and the book is stored away. The children in the preface to Little Plays are more real and lively than the ones in her stories. They think for themselves; they challenge their mother's opinions; and they demand the right to be taken seriously.

"Dumb Andy" is the best of the Little Plays and my discussion will centre on it. "Dumb Andy" is the story of an orphan boy who is

travelling with the Branigans, a pair of thieves. Attempting to arouse the sympathy of the upper class children, the Branigans slip past the castle gate and deceive the Bridgeman children into thinking that they are disabled yet honest and worthy recipients of charity. The children attempt to help them by pleading their cause to their parents, but the parents are more skeptical and urge the children to devise a plan whereby they can determine the honesty of the beggars. The beggars are discovered and Dumb Andy, the orphan boy, is turned over to the gatekeepers to educate him properly. As other Edgeworth stories, this play has a moral intent. The moral lesson in the story is concerned with dumb Andy and his honesty. Andy is a pathetic little orphan who would much prefer to earn his living by working. But his association (unwilling but grateful) with the Branigans forces him to be dishonest. Andy suffers the pangs of conscience:

> Oh! if it was pleasing to Heaven! and if it could be without offense to these that has been father and mother to me, when mine was took from me, I'd like better to follow some honest industry, sooner nor this cheating life of a dumb beggar. But what help! could I turn traitor, or informer or runaway! -(pausing). No, I can be nothing else- I must be Dumb Andy. (333)

Curiously, Andy's tragic figure is not overplayed, as might have been the case. Andy is consistently portrayed as solemn and battling with his conscience, but, while he is contrasted with happy children and fumbling guardians, he does maintain the sympathy of the reader. As much as the play produces sympathy, Andy is never the object of laughter; he is always the object of the moral lesson. For Dumb Andy is not dumb at all, and after he confesses to the Bridgemans, he is forgiven for his deception because he had no mother or father - "none

to teach" him (350). The Bridgeman children are then grateful for the advantages of education that they have had, and all the children are reminded that honesty is the best policy.

The gatekeepers are Margery and Robin, an honest old couple who turn the Branigans away when they first come begging at the castle gates. Margery is a good woman who does not judge people and who allows everyone to have the benefit of the doubt. According to Margery, she and Robin have been married for forty years "and not a cross word or look ever came betwix' us" (325). The gatekeepers provide the perfect foil for Winny and Watty Branigan, the beggar couple who provide most of the humour in the play. Unlike the gatekeepers, the Branigans do not live in marital bliss; they argue continuously and Winny tells Watty "I've no objections in life to being a widow" (329). The reader first realizes, along with Margery, that everything is not all as it seems with the Branigans when Watty, who is at first disguised as a blind man, suggests that he can see a white house in the distance. After this blunder Winny mistakenly wallops Margery with a supposed baby, who doesn't cry, gives Margery a large bump, and turns out to be a wooden doll. The Branigans hide in the bushes while they change their disguises and have a rather comical argument in which they chide each other to get their stories straight. They finally emerge from the bushes as a soldier with a wooden leg, his brave wife who rescued him from the battlefield, and Dumb Andy who supposedly can neither hear nor speak.

The Bridgeman children, Ceasar, Jocelin and Bess, are playing on the front lawn of the castle. The children are some of Edgeworth's best and most realistic child portraits. While they are playing they

bicker back and forth gently. When they see the beggar couple coming they are completely duped and their sympathies are aroused. In order to ensure charity for these beggars the children run to their parents and breathlessly describe the situation. Their explanations are rather disjointed and their eagerness to explain is received most kindly by their parents. Mr. and Mrs. Bridgeman are definitely the most affectionate and natural parents portrayed in Edgeworth. Mr. Bridgeman kisses little Jocelin and, holding Ceasar and Bess by the hand, compliments them for their good nature even though he believes that the children have been deceived. The children interrupt their parents and each other on more than one occasion, and the conversation flows naturally and realistically. When Margery brings in the discarded disguises of the Branigans, the parents do not automatically explain the situation to the children; rather, they allow the children to reason it out for themselves. The children determine that the Branigans are fakes, but they still believe that Andy is dumb and resolve to help him if he is not lying. Mr. Bridgeman requests that the children devise a plan to determine if Andy is lying, while he and his wife go for a walk. The plans that the children devise are truly childlike in their simplicity and their effectiveness. Jocelin tickles Andy, Ceasar tries to startle him with a loud noise, and Bess tries to surprise him with a parrot who cries "You rogue." Andy is able to withstand all of these tests because he has been warned by Winny Branigan. When the Bridgemans overwhelm him with kindness, however, he is unable to remain dumb and cries for their forgiveness for deceiving them.

Compared to the nonsense of Edward Lear or the hopelessly ridiculous situations and names in Dickens, this little play does not appear to be very funny, but it is a delightful contrast to the moralizing and religious threats that had come before it. For the first time, it encourages the laughter of children, and in encouraging this laughter opens the door to the silliness and nonsense which enchant the child reader by the next century. Edgeworth, while not quite as passionate in her expressions of displeasure over the fairy tale, still had her feet planted in what was real, potentially real and rational. To tempt children to laugh was a giant step forward. Whether the laughter provoked the other slight differences in character is a question that is difficult to answer. The parents in "Dumb Andy" are concerned about their children, and even correct them when necessary, but they are not the wise educators who maintain a formal distance from their children. They participate in dialogue with their children and do not criticize them for their breathless excitement, passion or sentimentality. They allow the children to reason for themselves, but not in the same way that Rosamond is encouraged to reason. For Rosamond there is always the threat of making a wrong, rational choice, for which she will be punished in some fashion. The Bridgemans do not fear their parents or the punishment they might mete out; they simply love them and are not afraid to reveal their impetuosity. It is tempting to look at the publication date (1827) and explain away the differences by suggesting that Edgeworth had a change of philosophy over time. But the plays were written at a time when Edgeworth was still producing the sequels to her stories, sequels that reflect the same type of philosophy as

the original tales. "Dumb Andy" was written in 1814 and yet it is far less stilted than her later versions of Rosamond, Frank and Harry and Lucy. Perhaps this can be explained because her admitted intent in writing the later sequels was to complete her father's initial plan, and to make use of scientific facts and theories which he had written down and she felt were too valuable to go unused. Other than these three sequels, though, Little Plays for Children is the last of Edgeworth's children's stories. The date then does provide a possible explanation for Edgeworth's apparent shift in writing. By 1814, and certainly by the publishing date of 1827, Maria would have had the benefit of helping to raise her many brothers and sisters. She also had the security of living within her family circle for at least fifteen years as an esteemed older sister and valued literary partner. At the height of her literary popularity, she was a sought-after authoress and educationalist. Practical education, as it was modelled by justice, truth and humanity, was a system of education copied by many. If at this point Edgeworth decided to switch her tactics slightly she had nothing to lose. But the lag between the date of writing and the date of publication suggests that the plays may have been initially intended only for use in her own family. This would also explain the slight shift in writing style. Yet another possible explanation for the difference in Edgeworth's style is reflected in her letters which show an increasing personal awareness of the value of natural beauty. In 1831 she writes to Fanny Wilson,

> The lanes about this place are delightful--full of day-roses and singing birds and every figure we meet--old man, old woman, boy or girl with pitcher--ass with faggots or ploughman plodding home--picturesque--and even the pigs--Marlands.

> . . . I have much more pleasure infinitely more in my old age in the sight of the beauties of nature than I ever had in youth. It seems as if I had come into the possession of the fortune of my senses late in life and like all people not used early to riches I suppose I am inclined to make a sort of parvenu boasting of them. (2 July 1831)

Perhaps the "Fortune of her senses" was first evidenced in Little Plays for Children, particularly "Dumb Andy." While the plays reflect the same lack of description regarding settings, they do reveal a wealth of delightful, natural realism in characterization. The natural beauty of children is in evidence.

It is important to recognize that "Dumb Andy" is perhaps the only one of the plays to fall into the category of a freer portrait of reality and an example of the best of Edgeworth's writing. "The Grinding Organ" and "The Dame School Holyday" are not among Edgeworth's best writing and would seem to deserve Butler's criticism of having been part of a genre which Edgeworth did not master. "The Grinding Organ" is, however, the first children's story (in Edgeworth and her contemporaries) that displays the reality of domestic squabbling. Mama and papa, who are significantly better than Mrs. Ross, are nevertheless nothing like the revered parents in Rosamond or Frank. They argue and shout and do not appear to be very valuable as parental models. And Priscy (Mrs. Ross's daughter) is the worst brat yet to make an appearance in didactic literature. She roars and howls, but in the end her chastisement is causing her mother to lose "furniture, and china, and gig, and husband, and captain and all" (321). She does not repent and the reader assumes that she remains unchanged. The Haynes, although they bicker back and forth, are proved to be good parents through the behaviour of their children.

"The Dame School Holyday" shares a similar ending, in which the vices of the villains are thwarted but not exactly punished. Bridewell will not save these characters, and they are not used specifically to spout moral lessons. When Felix in "The Dame School Holyday" is unable to destroy the party and play of the minister's children, he is provoked and leaves, but the only moral suggested is "Handsome is that handsome does" (387). There is something almost unfinished about these two tales after having witnessed Edgeworth wrap the rest of her stories in neat moral packages. But her lack of moralizing and her dangling conclusions, where the readers are left to think what they will, are even less satisfying than her moral endings.

Although all of the plays differ slightly from her other children's stories, they do not deny Edgeworth's philosophy of education. In "Dumb Andy" in particular, she appears to be every bit as eager to teach children about the virtues of justice, truth and humanity. Her methods do seem to have changed subtly though, and the characters, although never the cardboard mannequins that critics accused them of being, became more natural, lively and true to life. They reflect the Maria Edgeworth witnessed in the letters rather than the author who was ever aware of her duty to instill moral lessons. Maria loved children and enjoyed playing and talking "nonsense and sense" with her brothers and sisters. She knew children so well because, in her own words, she would "lie down and let them crawl over me" (Newby 36). Her letters describe little children whom she met in her travels and enjoyed; they often mattered more to her than the opinions of her best critics. Her sister Harriet wrote of her:

> How astonished some of her solemn admirers would be if they were to see her rolling with laughter at some egregious folly and still more would some of the brilliant wits be surprised at the quantity of fancy and talent she wastes on us. (4 June 1820 to Harriet Butler)

At the age of fifty-eight, Maria describes her life to Honora Edgeworth, "We run in and out, and laugh and talk nonsense; and every little thing amuses us together: the cat, the dog, the hog, Mr. Barry, or a parachute blown from the dandelion" (3 September 1826 to Honora Edgeworth). These are the words of a woman who understood the universal and timeless nature of the child as a creature of delight.

Portraying the child, shamelessly, as a creature of delight, and catering to that nature are among Edgeworth's greatest contributions to the art of children's literature. She inherited from her predecessors a bleak perspective of the child as sinful by birth. With Rousseau's understanding of the innately good child as background, she understood the changing world not through a severe and dogmatic religious perspective but from an optimistic rational perspective. When criticized by her contemporaries as abandoning religion she resisted the temptation to fold to peer pressure and maintained her belief that while religion was important, and at the root of all her theory, it was in the end a personal choice. Her writing stood a greater chance of serving a broader audience while it remained non-sectarian. Edgeworth was not the first children's writer who saw the need to amuse children as well as to instruct them, but she was the first writer to remove literature for children from the stifling forces of church doctrine and fear-filled religion. Her stories for children reflected dire consequences for inhumane

behaviour, but the consequences were never as severe as the hell-fire and damnation promised by the Puritans, and by many of her contemporaries. Edgeworth substituted practical for religious morality. Justice, truth and humanity were the touchstones of that practical morality. Without those principles society degenerated into vice.

Edgeworth, in attempting to amuse her child-readers, introduced the first humour into children's stories. Her lively, realistic characters are not wooden with fear. Instead, in comparison to the writing prior to her time, Edgeworth's characters are vibrant and joyful. Having broken the hold of dogmatism which imprisoned children's literature, Edgeworth freed children's tales to move on to what they become in Catherine Sinclair, Charles Dickens and Edward Lear--unadulterated nonsense and fairy-tale imagination.

Maria Edgeworth was highly regarded in her own day as an authority in the education of children. Her stories were popular not only in England, but also in France and America, and while she did not particularly enjoy London society she was welcomed there. In 1840 she writes:

> I have chosen to go at this quiet time of year as I particularly wish not to encounter the bustle and dissipation and lionizing of London. For tho' I am such a minnikin lion now, and so old, literally without teeth or claws, still there be, that might rattle at the grate to make me get up and come out and stand up to play tricks for them --and this I am not able or inclined to do. I am afraid I should growl--I never could be as good-humored as Sir Walter Scott used to be, when rattled for and made to come out and stand on his hind legs. (19 November 1840 to Mr. Ticknor, Professor at Harvard University)

Edgeworth recognized the acclaim which she had achieved in her own day and although she was gratified by it, she did not seek it.

Why is it then, that a writer so popular in her own day could fall so far into obscurity so quickly? In 1905 Alfred Ainger lamented that people no longer recognized Maria Edgeworth or her work. In 1988 the situation has not improved. Maria Edgeworth gained acclaim as a writer of children's books in a period when she was able to gain superiority over her contemporaries. Although Barbauld, More, Trimmer and Sherwood were popular writers, they appealed only to a strictly religious audience. Edgeworth broke out of the mold of the religious moral writer and perfected the use of the moral tale to instruct and entertain children. Although greater numbers of writers were directing their efforts to the child audience in Edgeworth's day than in Janeway's or Bunyan's, the writers who followed Edgeworth were more numerous still. A market which was still fresh and in some ways untouched (Barbauld was the first to write for age two and three) was soon to be overwhelmed with writers and stories offering all sorts of different literature. Because of changing social and religious times, many of the writers who followed Edgeworth and her contemporaries were not bound to a doctrine of either religion or morality which predetermined the purpose of their writing. With the acceptance of the fairy tale and of nonsense into children's literature, writers were able to appeal to the imagination and fantasy of the child reader in a way which was not possible for Edgeworth.

The same reasons for which Edgeworth fell into obscurity suggest perhaps that she must remain there. The modern child is not content with only books when he has at his fingertips an assortment of visual

media to entertain and, possibly, instruct him. Television, videos, and music inundate the modern child with ideas, images and subliminal suggestions. Moral tales simply cannot compete. Aside from the book form in which they exist, the ideas about parenting and education are outdated by modern standards. While it may not be fair to judge Rosamond's mother too harshly within her social framework, in today's world Rosamond's mother would stand a good chance of being reported to social services. Edgeworth was able to appeal to child readers in her own day because her true-to-life characters modelled virtuous behaviour in situations which the reader recognized as real or potentially real. Edgeworth's characters no longer have the same appeal. While many of the lessons that Edgeworth teaches are timeless, and while many of the emotions she evokes are universal for children, they are wrapped within characters who live in the early 1800's, not the late 1900's.

It is necessary for critical study to recognize Edgeworth's genius. Although Edgeworth receives significantly more attention than some of her predecessors and contemporaries, there is still much critical scholarship that can be done. Little Plays for Children, which in my opinion is pivotal to understanding the entire scope of Edgeworth's work for children, is sadly neglected. Most critical opinion is based on generalizations extracted from studying Rosamond. These generalizations are not adequate explanations and tend to promote rather than prevent Edgeworth's fall into greater obscurity. Perhaps our first step in "rescuing" Edgeworth's "stranded ghost" is the recognition of her worth to the common reader. Edgeworth was recognized by contemporary readers as offering valuable insights into

the education of children. She was recognized by contemporary child readers as one who provided entertainment and delight. Today's common readers do not recognize Edgeworth, but they enjoy the freedoms to which her literature led. In this way, then, perhaps the common reader, uncorrupted by literary prejudices and the dogmatism of learning, can still bestow "all claim to poetical honours" on Maria Edgeworth.

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